A RENEGADE POET

AND OTHER ESSAYS

FRANCIS THOMPSON

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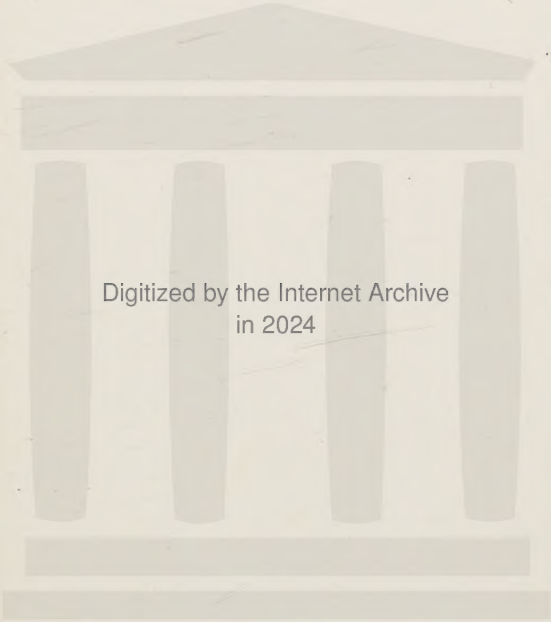
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A RENEGADE POET

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

FRANCIS THOMPSON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

EDWARD J. O'BRIEN

BOSTON

THE BALL PUBLISHING CO.

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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

In a London hospital, in November, 1907, there died a man of the rarest genius, whom sorrow had marked for her own from his earliest years. His work was accomplished, and naught remained for him in life. For the past few years he had intellectually ceased to be, and the main enduring product of his labors had appeared during the four years preceding 1897.

This man was Francis Thompson, who, like Lamb, was "called by sorrow and anguish and a strange desolation of hopes into quietness, and a soul set apart and made peculiar to God." He was a singer of songs, and as one whom Meredith and Patmore have acknowledged as a peer, his work is worthy of more than passing

note — above all, since his life was romantic, and his poetry, nay, even his name, was, till lately, unknown in America. There are others of the little band to which he belongs whose works should be more familiar to us, but none of them,— not even Lionel Johnson,— has the fine poetic madness to such a notable degree as Francis Thompson. His life will interest us in many respects, especially as it has many points of resemblance to the unhappy years which De Quincey has pictured in his poignant autobiography. We may say that both men had sown in tears that they might reap in triumph. They expected bread and they were given a stone.

Francis Thompson was born in 1860, and was the son of a physician practising in Manchester, England. His parents, who were converted to the Roman Catholic faith at the time of the Oxford movement, gave their son a good education, sending him to St. Cuthbert's College, at

Ushaw, near Durham, where he spent seven years. From Ushaw he was sent to Owens College in his native city, to study medicine, but much against his will. Instead of attending medical lectures, he spent his whole time in the public libraries, following the bent of his own desires. His father, discovering these pursuits, disowned him, and the sorrow of neglected filial duty only served to aggravate the bodily ailments of the poet. He fell dangerously ill in Manchester, like De Quincey. When he was sufficiently recovered, he made his way with difficulty up to London, and found, as the other writer before him, that Oxford Street is lacking in sympathy to impecunious would-be *littérateurs*. His little stock of money gradually dwindled, and as he was too delicate for manual labor, when he could not obtain literary employment, he sank lower and lower into the mire. Like De Quincey also in this respect, at one time his sole riches consisted in two books,— a copy of

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Æschylus in one pocket and a copy of Blake in the other. Reduced to beggary, so that he sold pencils in the street, and performed such other trifling services to gain a little bread as the law allows in its toleration of mendicants, one touching incident which occurred at this time reminds us of De Quincey's meeting with Ann. In its pictorial suggestiveness, some of us may think the story as Thompson tells it even more pathetic. Let us hear it in the author's own words:

"Forlorn, and faint, and stark,
I had endured through watches of the dark,
The abashless inquisition of each star,
Yea, was the outcast mark
Of all those heavenly passers' scrutiny;
Stood bound and helplessly
For Time to shoot his barbéd minutes at me;
Suffered the trampling hoof of every hour
In night's slow-wheeléd car;
Until the tardy dawn dragged me at length
From under those dread wheels; and, bled of strength,

I waited the inevitable last
Then there came past
A child; like thee, a spring-flower; but a flower
Fallen from the budded coronal of Spring,
And through the city-streets blown withering.
She passed,— O brave, sad, lovingest, tender thing!—
And of her own sad pittance did she give,
That I might eat and live:
Then fled, a swift and trackless fugitive."

We may consider this as a gift of one child to another, for, as a friend has beautifully phrased it, "Thompson's was a child-spirit retained to the end: wandering perplexed through this tangled and bewildering world: looking out upon it all with the grave and solemn wonder of a child." Indeed the poet once expressed a desire that after death he might be sought in the nurseries of Heaven. After five years of terrible privation, in which he must have sounded the very bass-string of humility, Thompson fell into the kind

hands of Mr. and Mrs. Meynell, and, after he had received medical treatment, was placed with the Premonasterian Fathers at Storrington. Here, and later at Crawley and elsewhere, Thompson wrote the whole of his poetical work. He fought long and bravely for many years against tuberculosis, until the flame of his life began to flicker. At last, however, on November 2, 1907, he entered the hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth, in St. John's Wood, London, and there he passed away quietly at dawn on November the thirteenth,

> "Fading from a garden to a grave,
> Passing without a tear into the stars."

A friend has written, "It was a part of him to die in the month of the dead. His death was the last dissolving harmony in a life of clashing discords!" There were elements in his character which were the air and fire and dew of songs, yet no genius had so sad a life,— not Keats, not Chat-

terton, not Poe,— and we are tempted to echo his own words, written in retrospect, yet felt none the less keenly:

> "Ah! must —
> Designer infinite! —
> Ah! must thou char the wood ere thou canst limn with it?"

A wanderer alike in vision and in life, he had climbed his Calvary, and his peace was made, after such privations as would have rendered any other man incapable of literary work, if indeed they had not deprived him of his reason.

His published work is comprised in three slender volumes of verse, entitled respectively "Poems," "New Poems," and "Sister Songs"; a large body of uncollected prose contributed to "Merry England," "The Academy," "The Athenæum," and two or three other periodicals; an essay on Shelley; a volume of ascetic practice entitled "Health and Holiness"; and a life of St. Ignatius Loyola.

Though it is on his poetry that Thompson's fame has hitherto rested, he has also bequeathed to us a precious legacy of prose which the world will not willingly let die. That admirable treatise on asceticism, "Health and Holiness," is only too little known, but is scarcely inferior in its way to the essay on "Shelley," whose recent posthumous publication in the *Dublin Review* sent that worthy, if slightly somniferous, periodical into a second edition. Its republication both in England and America has been the signal for a simultaneous burst of applause from all quarters. Yet Thompson has written even more worthy prose than that. Take, for example, the marvellous prose poem, "Moestitiae Encomium," reprinted for the first time in this volume. I have no hesitation in claiming it as the greatest of the three poems in that magnificent suite, whose other two members are De Quincey's "Levana" and James Thomson's "A Lady of Sorrow." "Come, therefore, O

Sadness, fair and froward and tender; wasp who followest the fliers: dolorous coquette of the Abyss, who claspest them that shun thee, with fierce kisses that hiss against their tears; wraith of the mists of sighs; mermaid of the flood Cocytus, of the waves which are salt with the weeping of the generations; most menacing seductress, whose harp is stringed with lamentations, whose voice is fatal with disastrous prescience; draw me down, merge me, under thy waters of wail!"

Such a cry as this can only come out of the depths, but the depths of this experience are the depths of vision and life. "Sadness the king-maker! *morituri te salutant!*":— these words unconsciously sum up the life and vision of a great poet, of Francis Thompson.

The child in him saved the poet from bitterness, though not from sorrow, and, after all, life seemed a wondrous God-given toy bestowed on him for his sport. Working after God's pattern he made an-

other toy which mirrored the first, and the deft elfishness of his prose reveals one aspect of it.

For Francis Thompson's style is marvellously ductile. He tames and bends words to his purpose like a young Mercury in his cradle fashioning a lyre. And he is so sublimely unconscious,— a god, and he knows it not.

St. Ignatius would have loved him as he loved Pedro de Ribadeneira. The comparison is not playful, for these two children who never grew up are really contemporary in more than a fanciful sense. Great artists and great saints never outgrow their childhood, for their simplicity is too disarming. They have the child's intuition which pierces through things, and this suffices them. Then, too, their mental gestures and movements have all the grace and charm of the physical movements of an unconscious child. It is given to them to love much, and to have sympathy for one another, and this is why a

saint can wish for no more sympathetic biographer than a poet who is pure of heart, and why Francis Thompson has interpreted so sympathetically the life of St. Ignatius.

Nowadays the biographer is supposed to be detached from his subject. This is what science has done for us. We learn much from the literary product, but we lose sight of two personalities, that of the subject and that of the biographer. You cannot be detached and also warm the imagination of your readers. But such, as I say, is the modern materialistic ideal in this era of laboratory courses in English in all our colleges.

For this reason, it is refreshing to stumble across one of these flesh-and-blood mediæval people who still believe in the fairies, and who suppose everyone else does too. Such a man is Francis Thompson, and the chief impression which we gather from his humorous essays in prose expression (I use the word humorous in a Bor-

rovian sense) is of a close impact of imaginative truth on reality. In this, Francis Thompson is exceptional. He is in the modern world, but not of it, and his fancy leads him to earlier days when the world was still young, and men sought the great quest,— to the age of Columbus and Bacon, of Ignatius and Teresa. He does not care to live; he only cares to love, and the ideal translated into action bears a noble fruit. There is a gentle childlike wistfulness about the man which creeps into our hearts as we read his prose, and which brings him very near. Watch his elfish eyes as he pretends to scold "that sad dog of a Robert Louis!" "Is there no utility in pleasure, pray you, when it makes a man's heart the better for it; as do, I am very certain, sun, and flowers, and Stevensons? They are medicinal, or language is a shelled pea's-cod!"

What could be more disarming than this gleeful utterance of a gleeful child! Truly it seems as if Francis Thompson

must have hidden behind Heaven's big front door when Crashaw and Herrick and he were appointed to go dancing out through life, and have played hide-and-go-seek so successfully with the angels that it took them three centuries to catch him. Then in revenge (as if angels could be revengeful!), they set him down on an earth which had just outgrown its childhood, and which was fraught with budding knowledge and power.

Poor poet! he paid for his trick in ample measure. The world of his fellows had grown up into lads,— cruel, thoughtless, superior lads, who had no sympathy for this baby cradled in the centuries. And so they pinched and teased him, and when he sang, at first they did not listen. But the singer had the courage of his song, and he never let discouragement choke the glorious voice within him. When he sang the burden of his heart, the poetry was poignant in its beauty, and when he laughed, as all of us must laugh now and

then just to show that we are still babes, the laugh was transmuted by his wand of fancy into a permanent and perfect beauty, the beauty of young, irresponsible, intuitive prose.

This elfish child of fancy who never grew to manhood ever grew in beauty. We all must grow, and if our intellect will not, then must our soul. To grow in soul is to grow in sympathy, and when Francis Thompson creeps toward mortals to cuddle a little bit, he comes very, very close. For, being a poet and a child, he gets at the heart of a man, and if he tugs a little, why 'tis a gentle thing! After all, babies have privileges, and their eyes see much that is lost to grown-up vision.

Thompson prattles along in his prose like a happy child, exuberant and fanciful. Now and then he has long chats with himself, and finds that, on the whole, he is good company. If he chats much, he sings to himself more. The burden of his song is light, for, being only a child, he has

no responsibilities, no doctrines, no heavy sense of an apostolic mission. He is the unconscious airy singer, the skylark who soars to heaven in a lyric rapture of exuberant irresponsibility. In the volume of "Poems," for example, we find the series entitled "Love in Dian's Lap," of which Coventry Patmore, no mean critic, has written that it is such a series of poems as St. John of the Cross might have addressed to St. Teresa, and as might well have filled the heart of Laura with pride. They resemble Crashaw when at his best, not only in their religious ecstasy, but above everything in all the daringly fantastic imagery, alternately spontaneous and studied, which we find in the earlier poet. However, the artifice, when it exists, is so cleverly concealed that at first reading we should hardly suspect Thompson's indebtedness.

These poems well exemplify the distinctive qualities, good and bad, of the poet's work. On the one hand they are rather

obscure, abounding in conceits and extravagant metaphors, but on the other hand, they are eminently characterised by a wealth of imagination, a subtlety of thought, and a magic of language to which no other modern poet but Shelley has been able to attain. Indeed, Thompson's "Ode to the Setting Sun" may be ranked with the few sublime odes of the language. Nay, we may almost say the same of "The Hound of Heaven," which carries the same appeal to its audience as some old "Ecce Homo."

It is such high poetry as this which makes us claim Thompson as a member of the great Victorian Pleiad: Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Matthew Arnold, William Morris and Francis Thompson — the roll is now complete. To rank these poets one above another would savor only of pretense. But this, surely, may be said of the last-named poet and his work: that to have known

and to have loved him is one of those spiritual gains in our lives which, come what may, can never be lost entirely. Thompson was rather a soul, a breath, than a man. It is the mind of a woman in the heart of a child, so that we feel for him less of admiration than of tenderness and gratitude. And though his life was comparatively a dream, nevertheless, it was, as Hazlitt has written of another, a dream of infinity and eternity, of death, the resurrection, and a judgment to come. Francis Thompson has done the world an inestimable good, if the world will but recognise it, for he has succeeded in revealing vividly in all things the Divine Presence which is Beauty. Truly a wonder was wrought through the humble priesthood of this poet inspired of God,

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us."

EDWARD J. O'BRIEN.

March 4, 1910.

A RENEGADE POET ON THE POET

'TIS an ill bird that fouls its own nest; and I trust an ill poet may have leave to do the same by his. As an ex-singer, I still have a benevolent desire to promote the multiplication of the class from which I have retired; and I can conceive no more assured method than this of abuse: "for as the camomile, the more it is trodden on, the faster it grows —".

A poet is one who endeavours to make the worst of both worlds. For he is thought seldom to make provision for himself in the next life, and 'tis odds if he gets any in this. The world will have nothing with his writings because they are not of the world; nor the religious, because they are not of religion. He is suspect of the worldly, because of his un-

worldliness, and of the religious for the same reason. For there is a way of the world in religion, no less than in irreligion. Nay, though he should frankly cast in his lot with the profane, he is in no better case with them; for he alone of men, though he travel to the Pit, picks up no company by the way; but has a contrivance to evade Scripture, and find out a narrow road to damnation. Indeed, if the majority of men go to the nether abodes, 'tis the most hopeful argument I know of his salvation; for 'tis inconceivable he should ever do as other men.

We may consider the nature of the poet as the world esteems him, as his admirers esteem him, and as he esteems himself. For the first, 'tis easily stated: the world esteems him a fool. In support of this opinion may be noted the general assertion that the poet is born, not made, which equally holds of the fool. And whereas some do none the less spend no small diligence in making themselves poets, others

spend no less diligence and capacity in making themselves fools, and with about equal success. But it is to be considered that poets are to be divided into major and minor; and that while no pains can make a man a major poet who is not such by the visitation of God, Mr. Traill would have it that men may, by extraordinary care, make themselves minor poets, whose number he has computed to be, at this present, fifty-two. It is much to be wished that he would investigate whether one might, with like zeal, modulate into the minor key of folly as of poetry. But whereas the discovery of fifty-two minor poets did much shock the general mind, it is to be feared that it would be quite otherwise surprised could he limit to fifty-two our minor fools.

But the world can find other good cause for doing what it has made up its mind to do without cause. Poets are said to be women; and that is the reason, perhaps, why the same writers who cry down poets

as women, do mostly cry down women as poets. But that poets are women I cannot believe, for we have yet heard nothing of poets' rights: from which it is manifest that poets are lamentably behind women in tenacity of their dues; who, indeed, hold everything that is their own, except their tongues. Nor is the sagacious world without yet another admirable reason for contemning the poet: viz., that he is useless. And it has lately received the most grateful support from Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson; from which I cannot but think we must accuse the carking influences of Samoan barons and *la haute politique* in the gilded saloons of South Sea diplomacy. He does not stick to affirm that the *littérateur* in general is but a poor devil of a fellow, who lives to please, and earns his bread by doing what he likes. Let this mere son of joy, says Mr. Stevenson, sleek down his fine airs before men who are of some use in the world. If the blood of the Haggards

is unapt to stir in this quarrel, 'tis no concern of mine; but on behalf of the poet, here lies my gage, and I will maintain with this poor gentlemanlike body that Mr. Stevenson aberrates from nice accuracy three feet down in his throat. If religion be useful, so is poetry. For poetry is the teacher of beauty; and without beauty men would soon lose the conception of a God, and exchange God for the devil: as indeed happens at this day among many savages, where the worships of ugliness and the devil flourish together. Whence it was, doubtless, that poetry and religion were of old so united, as is seen in the prophetic books of the Bible. Where men are not kept in mind of beauty, they become lower than the beasts; for a dog, I will maintain, is a very tolerable judge of beauty, as appears from the fact that any liberally educated dog does, in a general way, prefer a woman to a man. The instinct of men is against this *renegado* of a Robert Louis. Though

Butler justly observes that all men love and admire clothes, but scorn and despise him that made them, 'tis of tailors that he speaks. A *modiste* is held in as fair a reverence as any tradesman; and 'tis evident that the ground of the difference is because a *modiste* has some connexion with art and beauty, but a tailor only with ugliness and utility. There is no utilitarian but will class a soapmaker as a worthy and useful member of the community; yet is there no necessity why a man should use soap. Nay, if necessity be any criterion of usefulness, (and surely that is useful which is necessary), the universal practice of mankind will prove poetry to be more useful than soap; since there is no recorded age in which men did not use poetry, but for some odd thousand years the world got on very tolerably well without soap. Look closely into the matter, and there are no people really useful to a man, in the strict utilitarian sense, but butchers and bakers, for they feed a

man; builders, for they house a man; women, for they help him into the world; and doctors and soldiers, for they help him out of it. All the rest is luxury and superfluity. I will uphold that it is not necessary for any man to wear clothes, but it is necessary for many men to read poetry.[1] Lastly, I will be sworn that the utilitarian has no reason to hold a pound of poetry less useful than a pound of candles, for I am persuaded that he does not know the difference between them.

Then, too, this rogue of an R. L. S., I doubt me, (plague on him! I cannot get him out of my head), has found writing pretty utilitarian — to himself; and

[1] It may be said by the shallow, that clothes are necessary to one who lives in England. I reply that no man has any right to live in England, or any other region with a secondhand sun and a sky very much the worse for wear. Were it not for the unnatural and degrading habit of wearing clothes, we should all live in climates that had bread and sun *gratis*, where utility was useless, where everyone would understand poetry, and no one the British matron.

utility begins at home, I take it. Does he not eat and drink romances, and has he not dug up Heaven knows what riches (the adventurer!) in "Treasure Island"? 'Tis sure as that, if the fairy Good Luck have been invited to his christening, guineas drop from a lawyer's mouth whenever he opens it. And as for usefulness to other men, since we must have that or be ignoble, it seems — is there no utility in pleasure, pray you, when it makes a man's heart the better for it; as do, I am very certain, sun, and flowers, and Stevensons? They are medicinal, or language is a shelled pea's-cod!

So far the world, which cannot find that your Poet has any capital beyond the large one with which he delights to spell his name, or that poetry is quoted on the Stock Exchange. Yet there are who would have us trust the public for overseers of poetry, as Mr. Archer would for overseers of morality. And I will confess the public to be a natural overseer

of both poetry and morality, for 'tis most accustomed to overlook them both. But at the hands of his admirers the poet undergoes "a quick immortal change:" he is the sacred, the divine. Nature clearly provides for this, as appears by her somewhat nice attention to singers' names. No Higginson, for instance, could ever break his name's invidious bar: he is forewarned from poetry. The common tongue of fame would falter over — "In the deathless words of the divine Higginson." Yet something the child of song has fallen from his antique estate, even among his admirers. 'Tis a trite observation that of old prophet and poet were one, but 'tis a dear experience that nowadays they are divided; for there are no profits among poets. Whether poet and profit God ever joined together I know not, but 'tis very certain that man has put them asunder. Pindar, the *sacer vates* of the horse race, would in these times find but one half of his functions valuable;

but if the separation of them have not improved the breed of the sporting poet, we may indulge a just patriotism in the excellence to which it has brought the sporting prophet, whom I take to be Pindar's half-descendant. He is indubitably a *vates*, and in the sense of Horace's *auri sacra fames*, he may surely be entitled *sacer;* for after this meaning of the adjective, unlucky backers do constantly *sacrate* him in the Saxon vernacular. It may be much feared that the severance between poets and profits is grown a thing irreversible: I cannot perceive even among their admirers any disposition to make of them friends with the mammon of iniquity. There is a pernicious impression that the lightness of the singer's flight is dependent on the lightness of his purse; and that the muse, like a balloon, in order to ascend must throw out ballast. But indeed, 'tis the convinced belief of mankind that to make a poet sing you must pinch his belly, as if the Almighty had

constructed him like certain rudimentarily vocal dolls. Thus gunners use to light their gun at the breech, to bring fire out at the mouth; and schoolmasters use to cultivate a boy's head, by diligent application to the other extremity.

For the poet's opinion of the poet, 'tis hard to be come at: since regard for *his* modesty prevents him from expressing it in his own case, and in the case of his brother poets, his regard for theirs. Of the latter, indeed, he is far more tender than of his own (as our neighbor's reputation should be dearer to us than ours), and is most delicately chary of wounding it by excessive praise. But you may arrive at some surmise by observing that in the former case no estimate appears to him excessive, and in the latter no estimate not excessive. This, however, is only while his brother poets live; for in their regard he is like other men, who hold that poets are as Roman emperors, and only become gods when they die. "Woe

unto you when all men speak well of you," is indeed grown most applicable to poets at this present; for when that comes about, their admirers must either look to beweep their death, or that they are not dead. For my part, I retired from the profession because I found it no longer possible to read my poems even to the four walls of my room, on account of the singular effect. My landlord complained that I endangered the safety of the house, for the walls gave signs of yawning. But the less poets are honored by the world, the more they honor themselves. They have ceased, 'tis very notable, to invoke the muses at the head of their poems; for 'tis hard if a good modern poet may not inspire himself without calling in a muse. He thinks it enough indignity that he cannot lie in of a volume, but he must press some publisher to act as midwife: nor will the world be contrived to his liking till he can inspire, publish, and criticise himself.

For the rest, though he most usually conceits himself a great artist, he by no means accounts himself "divine" or "sacred," or reckons himself by any of the overweening epithets which his indiscreet belauders are accustomed to bestow on him. Indeed, you shall no more persuade a poet that his kind are prophets, than a woman that hers are angels. She will indeed very readily believe that *she* is an angel; and if it shall please any one to tell me that *I* am a prophet, I will not have so ill manners as to return him the lie. Though indeed I know not but in some sort the poet may have the forehand of the prophet; for the prophet foretells only what he knows, but the poet what he does not know. And as 'tis the more blessed way to believe and not see, than to believe and see; I perceive no good reason but it may be the more blessed way to prophesy and not foresee, than to prophesy and foresee.

Did we give in to that sad dog of a

Robert Louis, we must needs set down the poor useless poet as a son of joy. But the title were an irony more mordant than the title of the hapless ones to whom it likens him. *Filles de joie?* O rather *filles d'amertume!* And if the pleasure they so mournfully purvey were lofty and purging as it is abysmal and corrupting, then would Mr. Stevenson's parallel be just; but *then*, too, from ignoble victims they would become noble ministrants. 'Tis a difference which vitiates the whole comparison, O careless player with the toys of the gods! whom we have taken, I warrant me, more gravely than you take your whimsical self in this odd pleasantry! Like his sad sisters, but with *that* transfiguring distinction, this poet, this son of bitterness, sows in sorrow that men may reap in joy. He serves his pleasure, say you, R. L. S.? 'Tis a strange pleasure, if so it be. He loves his art? No, his art loves *him;* cleaves to him when she has become unwelcome, a

very weariness of the flesh. He is the sorry sport of a mischievous convention. The traditions of his craft, fortified by the unreasonable and misguiding lessons of those sages who have ever instructed the poet in the things that make for his better misery, persuade him that he can be no true singer without he slight the world. Wordsworth has taught him a most unnecessary apprehension lest the world should be too much with him; which, to be sure, was very singular in Wordsworth, who never had the world with him till he was come near to going out of it. The poor fool, therefore, devotes assiduous practice to acquiring an art which comes least natural to him of all men; and after employing a world of pains to scorn the world, is strangely huffed that it should return the compliment in kind. There is left him no better remedy but, having spent his youth in alienating its opinion, to spend his manhood in learning to despise its opinion. And though it be a hard

matter to contemn the world, 'tis a yet harder matter to contemn its contempt. I regard the villainous misleaders of poets who have preached up these doctrines as all one for selfish cruelty with those who maintained the tradition for operatic eunuchs; and would have them equally suppressed by Christian sentiment. For they have procured the severance of the one from his kind to gratify their understanding, as of the other to gratify their ear.

But this is to be serious, and I should apologise for being so much out of the fashion as to take poetry seriously; which no one now does — not even poets. 'Tis, indeed, a consummation devoutly to be wished, that your modern poet would take himself less seriously and poetry more so. If he would not be so inflexibly grave over that new-fangled style of "artist," which to his great English predecessors would have suggested only hogs' bristles and paint-pots! I know not why he should

hanker after the paint-pots of the Egyptians, and arrogate a title which gives color to calling him useless. The only utility ever alleged for the artist was the fostering of religion. To what that function has come may be seen in our churches; where the keenest denouncer of Papistry could not snuff idolatry in the kneeler before such images. Since though one should adore them, he would not transgress the First Commandment; for they are like nothing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth.

Odd's my life! I perceive I have clean forgot the most important aspect of my theme, which is the poet as the critic sees him. 'Tis briefly remedied. There are two kinds of critics: the first see nothing in him, and the second themselves. The latter is by far the more fashionable mode nowadays: the judicious critic (to speak by figure) uses polished poetry to reflect to readers his own countenance. I am

myself indifferently skilled in this way, though I have strangely neglected it in the present article; and, therefore, I am minded to let the reader know that I intend shortly to publish my autobiography, under the title "Reminiscences of Savage Landor." As I never saw Landor once, there is no danger that he will unduly interfere with the public's natural interest in me. This I think fit to acquaint the reader with, lest he should fall into an ill opinion of my genius, and unhappily conceive me destitute of modern literary gifts, when he discerns that I have written with a design to exhibit not my own greatness, but the poet's. I am sensible that by such a method I shall justly undergo the censure of the present age as a critic of very little understanding. For 'tis a principle universally conceded, that, since the work of a great author is said to be a monument, your true critic, like your true Briton, does best evince his taste and sense by cutting his own name on it.

'Tis a procedure so accredited that across even the *titulum* of Golgotha a German scrawls "Johann Strauss," half hiding the Name of names; Christ finds an English Archdeacon more merciless than Herod, for after being exhibited to the Jews clothed in a fool's garment, he is exhibited to the English clothed with a fool; and adds to the carrying of the Cross the carrying of Renan. 'Tis a reversal worthy to be ranked as a later Passion that He should bear among the Forty the same animal which once bore Him among the Twelve. But indeed, this manner of criticism and biography is the only one in scientific accord with the philosophy of the age. For modern philosophy, like Mr. Oscar Wilde, has discovered that the easiest and most surprising way to make a new coat, is to turn an old coat inside out; and constructs its dogma as Mr. Wilde ('tis the observation of an acute critic) constructs his epigrams, by reversing the platitudes and truisms of former teaching.

Thus, 'tis its first dogma that there is no dogma; its first precept, that every man has an obligation to believe that he has no obligation to belief; with many more such Wildish paradoxes. Not the least pretty of these is that which touches the first source of all worship, and 'tis obtained by a simple reversal of the saying in Genesis: — *Man made God to his own image and likeness.* Now 'twould argue a lamentable lack of modernity if your true critic should not remember the anthropomorphic origin of worship in his devotion to illustrious authors, and plainly instruct the reader by his language that he adores in Keats or Shelley what Narcissus did in the stream. Angelica Kaufmann, studying the practice of so many famous painters, to search out the one countenance which seemed to them the supreme type of beauty and paint all their faces from it, excellently discovered both her sex and her thoughts by painting all *her* faces after her own: and the

great critics are much beholden to her example.[2] They have contrived a method to hand themselves down to posterity through the gods of literature, as did the Roman emperors through the gods of Olympus — by taking the head off their statues, and clapping on their own in its stead.

Yet, though I admit the soundness of the principle, and do devoutly hold to its practice, I have at times a strange backsliding from modernity, an odd diseased kind of taste; which finds more comely and more reviving a life of Christ in which "Luke" or "John" appears only at top of the page, than one in which Ernest plays the part of a Gallic Judas, who should lend the Master a supper-room, and charge a franc a head for *tout Paris*

[2] I have seen this asserted, but take it for a libel on poor Angelica. The face which pervades her pictures is the conventional pseudo-Greek face which pervades all the would-be "ideal" painting of her day.

to peep at Him through the keyhole. 'Tis partly, I take it, a passing access of this humor which has perverted me throughout such a masterpiece of literature as the present, to retire myself in the background with so obtrusive a modesty. Yet when I think on it, I lie; for though I have kept indifferent well to my subject, 'tis chiefly written to display my own wit. Now I have heard that every reader finds in a book exactly what he brings with him to the reading. And since I am satisfied that the reader brings to the consideration of this article an infinite deal of wit, I can be under no apprehension of what he will discover in it.

PAGANISM: OLD AND NEW

"So died the old; here comes the new:
Regard him; — a familiar face!"
—*Tennyson.*

HOW define new paganism? Most modern beliefs are easily defined. Agnosticism is the everlasting perhaps. An Atheist is a man who believes himself an accident. Morality (modern) is the art of defining your principles to oppose your practice. Immorality (again modern)— well, it was excellently defined by Pope as

". . . A monster of such frightful mien
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen."

That is to say, nobody minds it, if it be only kept out of sight. But a definition of New Paganism is yet to seek.

That men who find Christianity too hard of belief should come to believe in Paganism, sounds, I know, like an absurdity. But nothing is so incalculable as the credulity of incredulity. Nevertheless it is not Paganism pure and simple which these men would restore. Rather it is the habit of mind, the sentiment, the *ethos* of Paganism. If my view be correct, they would use the old "properties" of Paganism to deck out their own material nature-worship. Venus would thus become what Tennyson has so eloquently described Lucretius as holding her to be. Ceres and Bacchus would become representative of the bounty and lustihood of Nature. The staid and severe would have their Pallas, and render homage to natural wisdom and self-control. Meanwhile all this would be in nowise novel, but indeed a revival of Paganism,— of a phase, and a late phase, of Paganism. There are cycles in thought as in the heavens; and old views in time become new views.

Here is a natural religion obviously capable of accommodating itself to widely different natures by reason of its entire flexibility. But though in this way mischievously catholic as atheism, it can, unlike atheism, surround itself with the prestige of a great past — though a dead past; of a poetry — though a dead poetry; of a sculpture — though a dead sculpture; of an art — which is *not* dead. And it can proclaim that, with the revival of dead Paganism, these other dead things too shall live. It is with this æsthetic aspect of New Paganism that I wish to deal.[1]

One of its chief recommendations to intellectual minds is the often-eulogised beauty of Paganism. The old gods, say its advocates, were warm with human life, and akin to human sympathy: beautiful

[1] I ought here, properly, to discuss the chances of pagan principles ever becoming more than the craze of a clique in England. But space forbids. Suffice it to say that there is a "*nidus*," and the disease-germs are abroad.

gods whose names were poetry. Then the daily gracefulness of pagan life and religion! The ceremonial pageants, with the fluent grace of their processional maidens, as they

> ". . . . shook a most divine dance from their feet,"[2]

or the solemn chastity of their vestal virgins; the symmetry of their temples with their effigies of benignant powers; the street, adorned with noble statuary, invested with a crystal air, and bright with its moving throng in garments of unlabored elegance; and the theatre unroofed to the smokeless sky, where an audience, in which the merest cobbler had some vision beyond his last, heard in the language of Æschylus or Sophocles the ancestral legends of its native land.

With all this, the advocates I speak of contrast the condition of to-day. The cold formalities of an outworn worship;

[2] Chapman, "Odyssey."

our *ne plus ultra* of pageantry, a Lord Mayor's Show; the dryadless woods regarded chiefly as potential timber; the grimy street, the grimy air, the disfiguring statues, the Stygian crowd; the temple to the reigning goddess Gelasma, which mocks the name of theatre; last and worst, the fatal degradation of popular perception, which has gazed so long on ugliness that it takes her to its bosom. In our capitals the very heavens have lost their innocence. Aurora may rise over our cities, but she has forgotten how to blush.

And those who, like the present writer, tread as on thorns amidst the sordidness and ugliness — the ugly sordidness and the sordid ugliness — the dull materiality and weariness of this unhonored old age of the world,— cannot but sympathise with these feelings,— nay, even look back with a certain passionate regret to the beauty which invested at least the outward life of those days. But in truth with this outward life

the vesture of beauty ceases: the rest is a day-dream, lovely it is true, but none the less a dream. Heathenism is lovely *because* it is dead. To read Keats is to grow in love with Paganism; but *it is the paganism of Keats.* Pagan Paganism was not poetical.

Literally, this assertion is untenable. Almost every religion becomes a centre of poetry. But if not absolutely true, it is at least true with relation to Christianity. The poetry of Paganism is chiefly a modern creation; in the hands of the pagans themselves it was not even developed to its full capabilities. The gods of Homer are braggarts and gluttons; and the gods of Virgil are cold and unreal. The kiss of Dian was a frigid kiss till it glowed in the fancy of the barbarian Fletcher: there was little halo around Latmos' top, till it was thrown around it by the modern Keats. No pagan eye ever visioned the nymphs of Shelley.[3] In truth

[3] I have here implicitly assumed a distinction

there was around the Olympian heaven no such halo and native air of poetry as, for Christian singers, clothed the Christian heaven. To the heathen mind its divinities were graceful, handsome, noble gods; powerful, and therefore to be propitiated with worship; cold in their sublime selfishness, and therefore unlovable. No pagan ever loved his god. Love he might, perhaps, some humble rustic or domestic deity,— but no Olympian. Whereas, in the Christian religion, the Madonna, and a greater than the Madonna, were at once high enough for worship and low enough for love. Now, without love no poetry can be beautiful; for all beautiful poetry comes from the heart. With love it was that Wordsworth and Shelley purchased the right to sing sweetly of nature. Keats wrote lovingly of his pagan hierarchy, be-

which I should rather explicitly have formulated, between the poetry lurking in the pagan myths and the poetical ideas associated with them by the pagans themselves.

cause what he wrote about he loved. Hence for no antique poet was it possible to make, or even conceive, a pagan Paradise. We, who love the gods, do not worship them. The ancients, who worshipped the gods, did not love them. Whence is this?

Coleridge, in those beautiful but hackneyed lines from "Wallenstein," has given us his explanation. It is true, yet only half the truth. For in very deed that beautiful mythology has a beauty beyond anything it ever possessed in its worshipped days; and that beauty came to it in dower when it gave its hand to Christianity. Christianity it was that stripped the weeds from that garden of Paganism, broke its statue of Priapus, and delivered it smiling and fair to the nations for their pleasure-ground. She found Mars the type of brute violence, and made of him the god of valor. She took Venus, and made of her the type of Beauty,— Beauty, which

the average heathen hardly knew. There is no more striking instance of the poetising influence exerted on the ancient mythology by Christianity than the contrast between the ancient and modern views of this goddess. Any school-boy will tell you that she was the goddess of love and beauty. "Goddess of Love" is true only in the lowest sense, but "Goddess of Beauty"? It exhibits an essentially modern attitude towards Venus, and would be hard to support from the ancient poets. No doubt there are passages in which she is styled the beautiful goddess; but the phrases are scarcely to my point. If, reader, in the early days of the second Empire, you came across a writer who described the Empress Eugénie as "the beautiful Empress," you would hardly be fair in deducing from *that* his devotion to her as the Empress of Beauty. No; when Heine, addressing the Venus of Melos, called her "Our Lady of Beauty," the

idea, no less than the expression, was centrally modern. I will go further. It was centrally Christian.

To the average pagan, Venus was simply the personification of the generative principle in nature; and her offspring was Cupid — Desire, Eros — sexual passion. Far other is she to the modern. To him she is the Principle of Earthly Beauty, who being of necessity entirely pure, walks naked and is not ashamed, garmented in the light of her unchanging whiteness. This worship of Beauty in the abstract, this conception of the Lady Beauty as an all-amiable power, to register the least glance of whose eye, to catch the least trail of whose locks were worth the devotion of a life,— all this is characteristic of the Christian and Gothic poet, unknown to the pagan poet. No antique singer ever saw Sibylla Palmifera; no antique artist's hand ever shook in her pursuit.[4] The

[4] Philosophers and "dreaming Platonists," perhaps, had scaled her craggy heights after their own

sculptors, I suspect, had known something of Sibylla, in the elder days, before Praxiteles made of the Queen of Beauty merely the Queen of Fair Women. The Venus of Melos remains to hint so much. But, besides that Greek sculpture is virtually dead and unrevivable in civilized lands, I do not purpose in this narrow space to deal with subjects so wide as Sculpture or Art. Suffice it if I can suggest a few of the irreparable losses to Poetry which would result from the supersession of the Christian by the Pagan spirit.

If there are two things on which the larger portion of our finest modern verse may be said to hinge, they are surely Nature and Love. Yet it would be the merest platitude to say that neither the one nor the other, as glorified by our great modern poets, was known to the singers of old.

manner, but none will pretend that Platonic dreams of the "First and Only Fair" were the offspring of Paganism. Rather were they a contravention of it.

Their insensibility to landscape was accompanied and perhaps conditioned by an insensibility to all the subtler and more spiritual qualities of beauty; so that it would hardly be more than a pardonable exaggeration to call Christianity (in so far as it has influenced the arts) the religion of beauty, and Paganism the religion of form and sense. Perhaps it is incorrect to say that the ancients were indifferent to landscape: rather they were indifferent to Nature. Cicero luxuriates in his "country," Horace in his Soracte and fitful glimpses of scenery; but both merely as factors in the composition of enjoyment; the bees, the doves of Virgil are mere ministers to luxury and sleep. "The fool," says Blake in a most pregnant aphorism, "The fool sees not the same tree as a wise man sees." And assuredly no heathen ever saw the same tree as Wordsworth. For it is a noteworthy fact that the intellect of man seems unable to seize the divine beauty of Nature, until

moving beyond that outward beauty it gazes on the spirit of Nature; even as the mind seems unable to appreciate the beautiful face of woman until it has learned to appreciate the more beautiful beauty of her soul. That Paganism had no real sense of the exquisite in female features is evident from its statues and few extant paintings: mere regularity of form is all it sees. Or again, compare the ancient erotic poets, delighting in the figure and bodily charms of their mistresses, with the modern love-poets, whose first care is to dwell on the heavenly breathings of their ladies' faces. Significant is it, from this point of view, that the very word in favorite use among the Latin poets to express beauty should be "*forma*," form, grace of body and line. When Catullus pronounces on the charms of a rival to his mistress, he never even mentions her face. "Candida, longa, recta;" that is all: "She is fair, tall, straight."

But the most surprising indication of

this blindness to the subtler qualities of beauty is the indifference of the ancient singers to what in our estimation is the most lovely and important feature in woman — the eye. This may have some connection with their apparent deadness to color. But so it is. In all Catullus there is only a single *indirect* allusion to the color of Lesbia's eyes. There is, to the best of my recollection, no such allusion at all throughout Tibullus, Propertius, or Ovid. This one fact reveals a desert of arid feeling in the old erotic poets which a modern imagination refuses to traverse. In the name of all the Muses, what treason against Love and Beauty! Why, from the poetical Spring of Chaucer to the Indian-Summer of Mr. William Morris, their ladies' eyes have been the cynosure of modern love-poets!

"Debonair, good, glad, and sad,"

are the admirably chosen words in which Chaucer describes his Duchess' eyes; and

this is the beautiful passage in which Mr. Morris sets *his* lady's eyes before us:

> "Her great eyes, standing far apart,
> *Draw up some memory from her heart,*
> And gaze out very mournfully;
> Beata mea Domina! —
> So beautiful and kind they are,
> But most times looking out afar,
> Waiting for something, not for me.
> Beata mea domina!"

The value which Mr. Morris' master, Rossetti, had for this feature in feminine attraction is conspicuous. Witness his Blessed Damozel, whose

> "Eyes were deeper than the depth
> Of waters stilled at even."

In his mistress' portrait he notes

> "The shadowed eyes remember and forget."

Tennyson has his

> "Eyes not down-dropt nor over-bright, but fed
> With the clear-pointed flame of chastity."

And almost all his heroines have their characteristic eyes: the Gardener's Daughter, violet; Amy, of Locksley Hall, hazel,

"All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark
of hazel eyes;"

Enid, meek blue eyes, and so on.
Wordsworth, again, notes his wife's

"Eyes like stars of twilight fair;"

and has many a beautiful passage on female eyes. Shelley overflows with such passages, showing splendid power in conveying the idea of *depth:* the following is a random example;

"—— deep her eyes as are
Two openings of unfathomable night
Seen through a tempest's cloven roof."

Will anyone forget the eyes of the dreaming Christabel?

"Both blue eyes more bright than clear,
Each about to have a tear."

One could multiply instances; but take as a last one those magnificent eyes of De Quincey's Mater Suspiriarum; "Her eyes were filled with perishing dreams, and wrecks of forgotten delirium."

Again, what a magnificent means of characterisation — especially in personification — do our poets make of the eye. Could anything be more felicitous than Collins' Pity

"With eyes of dewy light?"

And equally marvellous is Shelley's epithet for sleep;

"Thy sweet child sleep, the *filmy-eyed.*"

Yet all this superfluity of poetic beauty remained a sealed fountain for the pagan poets! After such a revelation it can excite little surprise that, compared with Christian writers, they lay little stress on the grace of female hair.

But, after all, the most beautiful thing in love-poetry is Love. Now Love is the

last thing any scholar will look for in ancient erotic poetry.[5] Body differs not more from soul than the Amor of Catullus or Ovid from the Love of Dante or Shelley;[6] and the root of this difference is the root of the whole difference between this class of poetry in antique and contemporary periods. The rite of marriage was to the pagan the goal and attainment of Love — Love, which he regarded as a transitory and perishable passion, born of the body and decaying with the body. On the wings of Christianity came the great

[5] It will not do to say that this was solely owing to the impossibility of what we call courtship in heathen society; and that heathen love was post-nuptial. It is sufficiently apparent from Martial's allusions that the married poems of Sulpicia, styled and considered "chaste" because addressed to her husband, would have justly incurred among us the reproach of licentiousness in treatment.

[6] An Anti-Christian in ethics. But the blood in the veins of his Muse was Christian. The spirit of his treatment of Love is — with few, if any, exceptions — entirely Christian.

truth that Love is of the soul, and with the soul coeval. It was most just and natural that from the Christian poets should come the full development of this truth. To Dante and the followers of Dante we must go for its ripe announcement. Not in marriage, they proclaim, is the fulfilment of Love, though its earthly and temporal fulfilment may be therein; for how can Love, which is the desire of soul for soul, attain satisfaction in the conjunction of body with body? Poor, indeed, if this were all the promise which Love unfolded to us — the encountering light of two flames from within their close-shut lanterns. Therefore sings Dante, and sing all noble poets after him, that Love in this world is a pilgrim and a wanderer, journeying to the New Jerusalem: not here is the consummation of his yearnings, in that mere knocking at the gates of union which we christen marriage, but beyond the pillars of death and the corri-

dors of the grave, in the union of spirit to spirit within the containing Spirit of God.

The distance between Catullus and the "Vita Nuova," between Ovid and the "House of Life," can be measured only by Christianity. And the lover of poetry owes a double gratitude to his Creator, Who, not content with giving us salvation on the cross, gave us also, at the Marriage in Cana of Galilee, Love. For there Love was consecrated, and declared the child of Jehovah, not of Jove; there virtually was inaugurated the whole successive order of those love-poets who have shown the world that passion, in putting on chastity, put on also ten-fold beauty. For purity is the sum of all loveliness, as whiteness is the sum of all colors.

And here the exigencies of space compel me to draw to a close. Else I would gladly have treated many points which I must perforce neglect. In particular, I would have made a detailed comparison

between the treatment of the pagan Olympus by the ancients, and by the moderns with Keats at their head, in order to demonstrate what I have in these pages merely advanced. One point, however, I must briefly notice.

This is the false idea that a modern Paganism could perpetuate, from a purely artistic sense, the beauty proper to Christian literature: that it is possible for the imaginative worker, like the conspirator in Massinger, to paint and perfume with the illusion of life a corpse. For refutation, witness the failure of our English painters, with all their art, to paint a Madonna which can hang beside the simplest old Florentine Virgin without exhibiting the absence of the ancient religious feeling.[7] And what has befallen the loveliness of Catholicity would — in a few generations,

[7] Rossetti is perhaps an exception. But he had the Catholic blood in his veins, and could not escape from it. His head might deny, but his heart worshipped.

when Christianity had faded out of the blood of men — befall the loveliness of Christianity.

Bring back then, I say, in conclusion, even the best age of Paganism, and you smite beauty on the cheek. But you *cannot* bring back the best age of Paganism, the age when Paganism was a faith. None will again behold Apollo in the forefront of the morning, or see Aphrodite in the upper air loose the long lustre of her golden locks. But you *may* bring back — *dii avertant omen* — the Paganism of the days of Pliny, and Statius, and Juvenal; of much philosophy and little belief; of superb villas and superb taste; of banquets for the palate in the shape of cookery, and banquets for the eye in the shape of art; of poetry singing dead songs on dead themes with the most polished and artistic vocalisation; of everything most polished, from the manners to the marble floors; of vice carefully drained out of sight, and large fountains of Virtue

springing in the open air; — in one word, a most shining Paganism indeed — as putrescence also shines.

This Paganism it is which already stoops on Paris,[8] and wheels in shadowy menace over England. Bring back *this* — and make of poetry a dancing-girl, and of art a pandar. This is the Paganism which is formidable, and not the antique lamp whose feeding oil is spent, whose light has not outlasted the damps of its long sepulture. She who created Zeus and Here, Phœbus and Artemis, Pallas Athene and the fair-haired Aphrodite, is dead, and

[8] Paris, it may be said, is not scrupulous as to draining her vice underground. But it is kept underground exactly to the same extent as vice was in the Plinian days. Private vice is winked at with a decorous platitude about "The sanctity of private life." If evil literature is openly written, what Roman or Italian of Pliny's (the younger) day thought anything of writing *"facetiae?"* If indecent pictures are displayed in the windows, what, I should like to know, if photography had flourished under Rome, would have been the state of the shop-windows of Pompeii?

lives only in her corruption; nor have we lost by her death one scintillation of beauty. For the poetry of Paganism (with reference to England) was born in the days of Elizabeth, and entered on its inheritance in the days of Keats. But could Paganism indeed grow supple in her cere-cloths, and open her tarnished eyes to the light of our modern sun — in that same hour the poetry of Paganism would sicken and fall to decay. For pagan Paganism was not poetical.

THE WAY OF IMPERFECTION

OVID, with the possible exception of Catullus, is the most modern-minded of Latin poets. It is therefore with delight that we first encounter his dictum, so essentially modern, so opposed to the æsthetic feeling of the ancient world, *decentiorem esse faciem in quâ aliquis nævus esset.* It was a dictum borne out by his own practice, a practice at heart essentially romantic rather than classic; and there can therefore be little wonder that the saying was scouted by his contemporaries as an eccentricity of genius. The dominant cult of classicism was the worship of perfection, and the Goth was its iconoclast. Then at length literature reposed in the beneficent and quickening shadow of imperfection, which gave us for consummate product Shakespeare, in

whom greatness and imperfection reached their height. Since him, however, there has been a gradual decline from imperfection. Milton, at his most typical, was far too perfect; Pope was ruined by his quest for the quality; and if Dryden partially escaped, it was because of the rich faultiness with which Nature had endowed him. The stand made by the poets of the early part of this century was only temporarily successful; and now, we suppose, no thoughtful person can contemplate without alarm the hold which the renascent principle has gained over the contemporary mind. Unless some voice be raised in timely protest, we feel that English art (in its widest sense) must soon dwindle to the extinction of unendurable excellence.

The elementary truth of Ovid's maxim it is scarcely requisite to uphold. We have yet to see the perfect faces that are one half so attractive as the imperfect faces. Can any reader tolerate the novelistic her-

oine with the Greek features and the exquisitely chiselled nose? The hero invariably marries her instead of the other young lady (whose nose is perhaps a trifle *retroussé*), in every respect more charming, who misses him simply through lack of this essential note of a heroine.

Would, however, that the thing stopped here. This vicious taste for perfection is the fruitful parent of unnumbered evils. It is difficult to calculate the ravages caused by the insane passion. We will say this — that a man who once indulges in it never knows where he may end. At first, perhaps, he will content himself with spiritual perfection; but the fatal craving, once established, demands continually fresh gratification. He presently begins to find fault with Nature, and to desire an unimpeachably artistic house; insensibly he forms an addiction to the sonnet, and thence glides into the research of orbed perfection in his jokes; by degrees he even comes to admire the paintings of M. Bou-

guereau, and so to the final abomination of the camellia and the double dahlia. We would not be thought to denounce *ex cathedrâ* the wish for religious perfection. Abstractly it is harmless enough; but we should be careful how we allow ourselves even these innocent gratifications,— they are often the first step on a course of unconscious declension which we shall regret all our after-lives. It is this which sometimes causes secular poets after a time to write distinctly inferior religious verse; under the impression, apparently, that secular poetry is an error of youth which must be expiated in maturity, and that only by direct consecration to religion can their art give glory to God. As if the flower could not give glory to God, until it abnegated its fragrance; as if the clouds of sunset could not give glory to God, until they had been passed through a bleaching-vat; as if the bird could not give glory to God, until it selected its airs from the

diocesan hymnal! Over the whole contemporary mind is the trail of this serpent perfection. It even affects the realm of color, where it begets cloying, enervating harmonies, destitute of those stimulating contrasts by which the great colorists threw into relief the general agreement of their hues. It leads in poetry to the love of miniature finish, and *that* in turn (because minute finish is most completely attainable in short poems) leads to the tyranny of sonnet, ballade, rondeau, triolet, and their kin. The principle leads again to æstheticism; which is simply the aspiration for a hot-house seclusion of beauty in a world which Nature has tempered by bracing gusts of ugliness. And yet again, by a peculiar refinement of perversity, it leads to the desire for perfect wives; though wherefore a man should desire a perfect wife it is indeed difficult to perceive. Why, he has to live with her! Now does anyone seriously long to companion a "Trea-

tise on Spiritual Perfection" bound in cloth — with the additional privilege of paying for the rebinding?

Returning to literature, however, let us consider more particularly the iniquity of this cult in generating the hero and heroine; who spring merely from the ambition to draw perfect characters — an ambition fatal to life-like rendering. The most nobly conceived character in assuming *vraisemblance* takes up a certain quantity of imperfection; it is its water of crystallisation: expel this, and far from securing, as the artist fondly deems, a more perfect crystal, the character falls to powder. We by no means desire those improbable incongruities which, frequent enough in actual life, should in art be confined to comedy. But even incongruities may find their place in serious art, if they be artistic incongruities, not too glaring or suggestive of unlikelihood; incongruities which are felt by the reader to have a whimsical hidden keeping with the congruities of the

character, which enhance the consent of the general qualities by an artistically modulated dissent; which just lend, and no more than lend, the ratifying seal of Nature to the dominating regularities of characterisation. From the neglect of all this have come the hero and heroine; and of these two the heroine is the worse. In most cases she is not a woman at all, but a male dream of a woman.

Among all prevalent types of heroine, *the* worst is one apparently founded on Pope's famous dictum,

"Most women have no characters at all —"

a dictum which we should denounce with scorn, if so acute an observer as De Quincey did not stagger us by defending it. He defends it to attack Pope. Pope (says De Quincey) did not see that what he advances as a reproach against women constitutes the very beauty of them. It is the absence of any definite character which enables their character to be moulded by

others; and it is this soft plasticity which renders them such charming companions as wives. It may be so. And it may be paradisiacal bliss to have a wife whom you can cut out on a paper pattern. Personally, we should prefer to keep a dog; it would be less expensive. But possibly all these things are so; and we address our remarks to De Quincey, therefore, with diffidence. Nor do we mean them to have more than a generic application: we are by no means of that influential class who think that the Almighty creates men, but makes women — as they make sausages. Still, we are inclined to fancy that you take outward pliability and the absence of imperiousness for lack of essential character. Now to execute your determination by command you must have a position of command; the lever requires a fulcrum. Without this position you must either maintain an isolated, futile obstinacy, or be content to sway not by bending, but by manipulating, the will of others. It is, we think, the

pleasanter way, and we are not sure that it is the less effectual way. Partly by nature, partly by the accumulative influence of heredity, partly perhaps by training, it is the way which instinctively commends itself to most women. But because in the majority of cases they accommodate themselves to male character and eschew direct opposition, it by no means follows if our view be correct, that they forego their own character. You might as well accuse the late Lord Beaconsfield of being wanting in character, because instead of hurling his ideas against an unstormable opposition he tactfully and patiently insinuated them. We should be inclined to say that the feminine characteristic which De Quincey considered plasticity was rather elasticity. Now the most elastic substance in Nature is probably ivory. What are the odds, you subtle, paradoxical, delightful ghost of delicate thought, what *are* the odds on your moulding a billiard ball? Watching the other day an

insect which betrayed a scientific curiosity with regard to our lower extremities, we signified to it our inhospitable disposition by poking it with a stick. Never did we see such a plastic insect. Curling up into a little black-brown pellet, it lay so motionless that we thought it dead; but in a few minutes it slowly uncurled, and after a period of cautious delay resumed its advance. Four times was this repeated, and on each occasion the advance was resumed as if never resisted. Then patience gave way. The insect was sent rolling into a little hole, where it lay curled up as before. For twenty minutes by the clock it remained still as death. Death, indeed, we thought had this time certainly overtaken it, and with a passing regret for our thoughtlessness we forgot the tiny being in thought. Tenderer were its recollections of us. When we awoke to consciousness it had resumed its crawling. If this be plasticity, then many women *are* plastic — very plastic.

An embodiment — or enshadowment — of the villainous saying which De Quincey thus approves, is that favorite creation of fiction which finds its most recognizable (because extremest) expression in Patient Grizzel and the Nut-brown Maid. Does anyone believe in Patient Grizzel? Still more, does anyone believe in the Nut-brown Maid? Their descendants infest literature, from Spenser to Dickens and Tennyson, from Una to Enid; made tolerable in the poem only by their ideal surroundings. The dream of "a perfect woman nobly planned" underlies the thing; albeit Wordsworth goes on to show that his "perfect woman" had her little failings. Shakespeare was not afraid to touch with such failings his finest heroines; he knew that these defects serve only to enhance the large nobilities of character, as the tender imperfections and wayward wilfulnesses of individual rose-petals enhance the prevalent symmetry of the rose. His most consummate woman, Imogen,

possesses her little naturalising traits. Take the situation where she is confronted with her husband's order for her murder. What the Patient Grizzel heroine would have done we all know. She would have behaved with unimpeachable resignation, and prepared for death with a pathos ordered according to the best canons of art. What does this glorious Imogen do? Why (and we publicly thank Heaven for it), after the first paroxysm of weeping, which makes the blank verse sob, she bursts into a fit of thoroughly feminine and altogether charming jealousy. A perfect woman indeed, for she is imperfect! Imogen, however, it may be urged, is not a Patient Grizzel. Take, then, Desdemona, who is. That is to say, Desdemona represents the type in nature which Patient Grizzel misrepresents. Mark now the difference in treatment. Shakespeare knew that these gentle, affectionate, yielding, all-submissive and all-suffering dispositions are founded on weakness, and accordingly he

gave Desdemona the defects of her qualities. He would have no perfections in *his* characters. Rather than face the anger of the man whom she so passionately loves, Desdemona will lie — a slight lie, but one to which the ideal distortion of her would never be allowed to yield. Yet the weakness but makes Shakespeare's lady more credible, more piteous, perhaps even more lovable, because more human. And Shakespeare's knowledge is borne out by the experience of those best qualified to speak. Woman is not as a Shakespearian maxim belied by the Shakespearian practice asserts, "a dish for the gods an the devil dress her not." She is a dish for men, and if she be imperfect the devil has little to do with it. Indeed we are sorry that Shakespeare stooped to this kind of thing. He might have left it to inferior men.

From the later developments of contemporary fiction the faultless hero and heroine have, we admit, relievingly dis-

appeared. So much good has been wrought by the craze for "human documents." But alas! the disease expelled, who will expel the medicine? And the hydra perfection merely shoots up a new head. It is now a desire for the perfect reproduction of Nature, uninterfered with by the writer's ideals or sympathies; so that we have novelists who stand coldly aloof from their characters, and exhibit them with passionless countenance.[1] We all admire the representations which result: "How beautifully drawn! how exactly like Nature!" Yes, beautifully drawn; but they do not live. They resemble the mask in "Phædrus"—a cunning semblance, *at animam non habet.* The attitude of the novelist is fatal to artistic illusion: his personages do not move us because they do not move him. Partridge believed in the ghost because "the little man on the stage was more

[1] We will not shield ourselves under generalities. We refer especially to Mr. Henry James.

frightened than I;" and in novel reading we are all Partridges; we only believe in the novelist's creations when he shows us that he believes in them himself. Finally, this pestilence attacks in literature the form no less than the essence, the integuments even more than the vitals. Hence arises the dominant belief that mannerism is vicious; and accordingly critics have erected the ideal of a style stripped of everything special or peculiar, a style which should be to thought what light is to the sun. Now this pure white light of style is as impossible as undesirable; it *must* be splintered into color by the refracting media of the individual mind, and humanity will always prefer the color. Theoretically we ought to have no mannerisms; practically we cannot help having them, and without them style would be flavorless —"faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null." No man will drink distilled water; it is entirely pure and entirely insipid. The object of writing is

to communicate individuality, the object of style to adequately embody that individuality; and since in every individuality worth anything there are characteristic peculiarities, these must needs be reproduced in the embodiment. So reproduced we call them mannerisms. They correspond to those little unconscious tricks of voice, manner, gesture in a friend which are to us the friend himself, and which we would not forego. Conscious tricks of habit, it is true, a person must avoid, because they become exaggerations; similarly, conscious mannerisms must be pruned, lest *they* become exaggerations. It is affected to imitate another's tricks of demeanor: similarly, it is affected to imitate another's mannerisms. We should avoid as far as possible in conversation passing conventionalities of speech, because they are brainless; similarly, we should avoid as far as possible in writing the mannerisms of our age, because they corrupt originality. But in essence, man-

nerisms — individual mannerisms, are a season of style, and happily unavoidable. It is, for instance, stated in the lately completed "Encyclopædia Britannica" that De Quincey is not a manneristic writer; and so put the assertion has much truth. Yet he is full of mannerisms, mannerisms which every student lovingly knows, and without which the essayist would not be our very own De Quincey.

We say, therefore: Be on your guard against this seductive principle of perfection. Order yourselves to a wise conformity with that Nature who cannot for the life of her create a brain without making one half of it weaker than the other half, or even a fool without a flaw in his folly; who cannot set a nose straight on a man's face, and whose geometrical drawing would be tittered at by half the young ladies of South Kensington. Consider who is the standing modern oracle of perfection, and what resulted from *his* interpretation of it. "Trifles make perfection,

and perfection is no trifle." No; it is half-a-pound of muscle to the square inch — and *that* is no trifle. One satisfactory reflection we have in concluding. Wherever else the reader may be grieved by perfection, this article, at least, is sacred from the accursed thing.

Now, how much of all this do we mean?

Hearken, O reader, to an apologue. Once on a time there was a hypochondriac, who — though his digestion was excellent — believed that his delicate system required a most winnowed choice of viands. His physician, in order to humor him, prescribed a light and carefully varied diet. But the hypochondriac was not satisfied.

"I want to know, Doctor," he said, "how much of this food really contributes to the building up of my system, and how much is waste material?"

"That," observed the sage physician, "I cannot possibly tell you without recondite analysis and nice calculation."

"Then," said the hypochondriac, in a rage, "I will not eat your food. You are an imposter, Sir, and a charlatan, and I believe now your friends who told me that you were a homœopath in disguise."

"My dear Sir," replied the unmoved physician, "if you will eat nothing but what is entire nutriment, you will soon need to consult, not a doctor, but a chameleon. To what purpose are your digestive organs, unless to secrete what is nutritious, and excrete what is innutritious?"

And the moral is — no. On second thoughts our readers shall have a pleasure denied to them in their outraged childhood. They shall draw the moral themselves. He that hath understanding, let him understand.

NATURE'S IMMORTALITY

IN the days when days were fable, before the grim Tartar fled from Cathay, or the hardy Goth from the shafted Tartar; before the hardy Goth rolled on the hot Kelt, or the hot Kelt on Italy; before the wolf-cubs lolled tongues of prey, or Rhodian galleys sheered the brine, an isle there was which has passed into the dreams of men, itself

> Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.

And when the Muses talked, they named it Sicily. Was it, and is it not? Alas! where's Eden, or Taprobane?

Where flows Alpheus now? You take a map (great Poetry! have they mapped Heaven?) and show me — what? The

dust-heap of Italy; a thing spurned contemptuously from the toe of the Ausonian mainland; you point to it, you man of knowledge, and this, you say, is Sicily. You may be right, I know not; but it is not Sicily to me. Yet that olden Sicily could not, cannot pass. Dew but your eyes with the euphrasy of fancy, and purge your ears with the poet's singing; then, to the ear within the ear, and the eye within the eye, shall come the green of the ever-vernal forests, the babble of the imperishable streams. For within this life of ache and dread, like the greenness in the rain, like the solace in the tear, we may have each of us a dreamful Sicily. And since we can project it where we will, for me, seeking those same

Sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing,

for me, perchance, Sicily may be Little Cloddington.

What balm then for hurt minds has my

Sicily? In the old Sicily "Shepherds piped on oaten straws," and the inhabitants were entirely worthy of their surroundings. But that cultivating influence of beauty which our æsthetes preach has somehow broken down in the case of Little Cloddington, and one begins to have an uneasy suspicion that the constant imbibing of beauty, like the constant imbibing of wine, dulls the brain which it is supposed to stimulate. Little Cloddington is islanded alike from the good and ill of knowledge. The local idea of geography is that Little Cloddington revolves on its own axis once every twenty-four hours. This, I confess, appears to me a dubious notion. Personally, I believe that it would take Little Cloddington at least a year to revolve on anything. The average agricultural laborer seems to be sprung from the illicit union of a mowing-machine and a turnip. From the mowing-machine he inherits his capacity for making hay, from the turnip his attachment to the

soil and his capacity for imbibing moisture. His very affections are strong only as the roots of a vegetable are strong; they have no vividness. Compared with the town-dweller, he is unquestionably innocent — innocent of everything. If this were the condition of man before the Fall — O! maligned Eve, blessings on thee! Without the admirable foresight of our First Mother, we should have been exceedingly good, doubtless; but how uncommonly stupid we should have been! It was Mark Twain who expressed his disappointment with the *grisettes* of Paris, whom Parisian novelists represented as beautiful, and as distinctly immoral. The disgusted humorist made very unchivalrous remarks about the *grisettes'* beauty, and declared that it would be gross flattery to say they were immoral. Mark's jest is fiction founded on fact. The cow is a most respectable, orderly, docile, and inoffensive animal; yet, since the days of Isis, no man has honored the cow. Now, there are hu-

man beings who possess a cow-like virtue, who pass their existences doing very little harm to anyone, and very little good. They are turned into life as into a pasture, and when their time comes they are turned out again. That is all.

Let us quit man, then, for Nature. To commune with the heart of Nature — this has been the accredited mode since the days of Wordsworth. Nature, Coleridge assures us, has ministrations by which she heals her erring and distempered child; and it is notorious how effectual were her ministrations in the case of Coleridge. Well, she is a very lovely Nature in this Sicily of mine; yet I confess a heinous doubt whether rustic stolidity may not after all be a secret effluence from her. You speak, and you think she answers you. It is the echo of your own voice. You think you hear the throbbing of her heart, and it is the throbbing of your own. I do not believe that Nature has a heart; and I suspect, that like many another beauty,

she has been credited with a heart because of her face. You go to her, this great, beautiful, tranquil, self-satisfied Nature, and you look for — sympathy? Yes; the sympathy of a cat, sitting by the fire and blinking at you. What, indeed, does she want with a heart or brain? She knows that she is beautiful, and she is placidly content with the knowledge; she was made to be gazed on, and she fulfils the end of her creation. After a careful anatomisation of Nature, I pronounce that she has nothing more than a lymphatic-vesicle. She cannot give what she does not need; and if we were but similarly organised, we should be independent of sympathy. We should all, in fact, be better if we had a forcing-pump instead of a heart. It is too frail a thing for working-days. The animal which enjoys the earthly *summum bonum* is unquestionably the pig; yet even the pig would be more perfect if it were without a heart. A man cannot go

straight to his objects, because he has a heart; he cannot eat, drink, sleep, make money, and be satisfied, because he has a heart. It is a mischievous thing, and wise men accordingly take the earliest opportunity of giving it away.

Yet the thing is after all too deep for jest. What is this heart of Nature, if it exist at all? Is it according to the conventional doctrine derived from Wordsworth and Shelley, a heart of love, according with the heart of man, and stealing out to him through a thousand avenues of mute sympathy? No; in this sense I repeat seriously what I said lightly: Nature has no heart. I sit now, alone and melancholy, with that melancholy which comes to all of us when the waters of sad knowledge have left their ineffaceable delta in the soul. As I write, a calm, faint-tinted evening sky sinks like a nestward bird to its sleep. At a little distance is a dark wall of fir-wood; while close at hand a small

group of larches rise like funeral plumes against that tranquil sky, and seem to say, "Night cometh." They alone are in harmony with me. All else speaks to me of a beautiful, peaceful world in which I have no part. And did I go up to yonder hill, and behold at my feet the spacious amphitheatre of hill-girt wood and mead, overhead the mighty aërial *velarium*, I should feel that my human sadness was a higher and deeper and wider thing than all. O Titan Nature! a petty race, which has dwarfed its spirit in dwellings, and bounded it in selfish shallows of art, may find you too vast, may shrink from you into its earths: but though you be a very large thing, and my heart a very little thing, yet Titan as you are, my heart is too great for you. Coleridge speaking, not as Wordsworth had taught him to speak, but from his own bitter experience, said the truth:

O Lady, we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone doth Nature live;

Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!

. . . . . .

I may not hope from outward forms to win
The glory and the joy whose fountains are within.

The truth, in relation to ourselves; though not the truth with regard to Nature absolutely. Absolute Nature lives not in our life, nor yet is lifeless, but lives in the life of God: and in so far, and so far merely, as man himself lives in that life, does he come into sympathy with Nature, and Nature with him. She is God's daughter, who stretches her hand only to her Father's friends. Not Shelley, not Wordsworth himself, ever drew so close to the heart of Nature as did the Seraph of Assisi, who was close to the Heart of God.

Yet higher, yet further let us go. Is this daughter of God mortal; can her foot not pass the grave? Is Nature, as men tell us, but a veil concealing the Eternal,

A fold
Of Heaven and earth across His Face,

which we must rend to behold that Face? Do our eyes indeed close for ever on the beauty of earth when they open on the beauty of Heaven? I think not so; I would fain beguile even death itself with a sweet fantasy, if it be no more than fantasy: I believe that in Heaven is earth. Plato's doctrine of Ideals, as I conceive, laid its hand upon the very breast of truth, yet missed her breathing. For beauty — such is my faith — is beauty for eternity.

If the Trinity were not revealed, I should nevertheless be induced to suspect the existence of such a master-key by the trinities through which expounds itself the spirit of man. Such a trinity is the trinity of beauty — Poetry, Art, Music. Although its office is to create beauty, I call it the trinity of beauty, because it is the property of earthly as of the heavenly beauty to create everything to its own image and likeness. Painting is the eye

of passion, Poetry is the voice of passion, Music is the throbbing of her heart. For all beauty is passionate, though it may be a passionless passion. So absolutely are these three the distinct manifestations of a single essence, that in considering the general operation of any one of them we consider the general operation of all; and hence, as most easily understood because most definitely objective in its result, I take Art. Not the so-called Art which aims at the mere photographic representation of external objects, for that can only reproduce; but the creative Art which alone is one essence with Poetry and Music.

In the artist's creation there are two distinct stages or processes, the second of which is but a revelation of the first. There is the ideal and the image of the ideal, the painting. To be more exact I should distinguish an intermediate stage, only theoretically separable in order of process from the first stage, with which

it is or may be practically synchronous. There is first the ideal, secondly the mental image of the ideal (*i. e.*, the picture of it in form and color formed on the mental eye [1]), thirdly, the external or objective reproduction of the mental image in material form and color, in pigments. Now of these three stages which is the most perfect creation, and therefore the most beautiful? They lessen in perfection as they become material; the ideal is the most perfect; the mental image less perfect; the objective image, the painting, least perfect. "But," you say, "this ideal is an abstract thing, without real existence." The commonest of errors, that the ideal is the unreal; and the more pernicious because founded on a truth. It is impossible to

[1] *On the mental eye.*— I use the popular expression. In reality this image is as really, as physically (I do not say as vividly) seen as is a ray of sunlight. It is therefore material, not spiritual. But this is not the place for a physiological discussion, and the popular phrase subserves my object, if it does not subserve accuracy.

speak here with the distinctions and modifications necessary for accuracy; but generally I may say this. The reality of the artist's ideal is not the reality of, *e. g.*, a star; for one is man's creation, the other directly from God. Nor is the reality of the artist's ideal the same in kind as the reality of its objective image, of the painting. The one exists externally, and the senses are cognisant of it; the other within his spirit, and the senses can take no account of it. Yet both are real, actual. If there be an advantage, it is not on the side of the painting; for in no true sense can the image be more real than the thing imaged. I admit that in man the ideal has not the continuous vividness of its objective image. The ideal may be dimmed or even forgotten; though I hold that in such a case it is merely put away from spiritual cognisance as the painting might be put out of physical sight, and that it still exists in the soul. But were the artist omniscient, so that he could hold

all things in perpetual and simultaneous contemplation, the ideal would have an existence as unintermittent as that of the painting, and unlike that of the painting, coeval with the artist's soul.

In Painting and Music the same thing holds good. In both there is the conception (a term perhaps less suggesting unreality than the term "ideal") with its material expression; and between these two stages a mental expression which the material expression cannot realise. The mental expression in its turn cannot represent all the qualities of the conception; and the conception, whose essence is the same in all three arts, has a subtlety which the expressional union of all three could not adequately render, because expression never fully expresses. Yet (and it is on this that I insist) the conception is an actually existent thing, an existence within an existence, real as the spirit in which it exists, *the* reality of which the objective reality is but the necessarily less perfect

image, and transcending in beauty the image as body is transcended by soul. Can it be adequately revealed by one mortal to another? No. Could it be so revealed? Yes. If the spirit of man were untrammelled by his body, conception could be communicated by the interpenetration of soul and soul.

Let us apply this.[2] The Supreme Spirit, creating, reveals His conceptions to man in the material forms of Nature. There is no necessity here for any intermediate process, because nobody obstructs the free passage of conception into expression. An ideal wakes in the Omnipotent Painter; and straightway over the

[2] Be it observed that I am not trying to *explain* anything, metaphysically or otherwise, and consequently my language is not to be taken metaphysically. I am merely endeavoring analogically to *suggest* an idea, as we analogically suggest, without explaining, the Trinity by the trefoil. And the whole thing is put forward as a fantasy, which the writer likes to think may be a dim shadowing of truth.

eternal dykes rush forth the flooding tides of night, the blue of Heaven ripples into stars; Nature, from Alp to Alpine flower, rises lovely with the betrayal of the Divine thought. An ideal wakes in the Omnipotent Poet; and there chimes the rhythm of an ordered universe. An ideal wakes in the Omnipotent Musician; and Creation vibrates with the harmony, from the palpitating throat of the bird to the surges of His thunder as they burst in fire along the roaring strand of Heaven; nay, as Coleridge says,

> The silent air
> Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

Earthly beauty is but heavenly beauty taking to itself flesh. Yet though this objective presentment of the Divine Ideal be relatively more perfect than any human presentment of a human ideal, though it be the most flawless of possible embodiments; yet is even the Divine embodi-

ment transcendently inferior to the Divine Ideal. Within the Spirit Who is Heaven, lies earth; for within Him rests the great conception of Creation. There are the woods, the streams, the meads, the hills, the seas that we have known in life, but breathing indeed "an ampler ether, a diviner air," themselves beautiful with a beauty which, for even the highest created spirit utterly to apprehend were "swooning destruction."

> Yet there the soul shall enter which hath earned
> That privilege by virtue.

As in the participation of human spirits some are naturally more qualified for interpenetration than others — in ordinary language, as one man is more able than his fellows to enter into another's mind, so in proportion as each of us by virtue has become kin to God, will he penetrate the Supreme Spirit, and identify himself with

the Divine Ideals. There is the immortal Sicily, there the Elysian Fields, there all visions, all fairness engirdled with the Eternal Fair. This, my faith, is laid up in my bosom.

STRAY THOUGHTS ON SHELLEY

IN the case of no English poet, I think, have we such a full and admirable opportunity of studying the relation between the poet and his poetry as in the cases of Keats and Shelley. Of the two, Shelley is for myself the more fascinating study; because the directer way in which the younger writer's character presents itself to our apprehension makes the problem more obvious with him. Yet the opportunities afforded in the instance of Shelley have simply split the public into two opposing camps over this question, each maddeningly extreme; the one camp wholly wrong, and the other so wrongly right that it were almost better to be wholly wrong. The one camp finds its typical, because hardy, representation in the say-

ing of a writer who two or three years ago denounced the poet in the pages of a Catholic periodical. Shelley, he said, was a filthy wretch; but though a filthy wretch might write angelic poetry, it could not make him an angel, or even a decent man. Here is the one view; that a poet's poetry has no connection with his personal character. Let me put it nakedly. That if Heliogabalus had possessed Shelley's brain, he might have lived the life of Heliogabalus, and yet written the poetry of Shelley. To those who believe this there is nothing to say. I will only remark in passing that I take it to be the most Tartarian lie which ever spurted on paper from the pen of a good man. For the writer *was* a good man, and had no idea that he was offering a poniard at the heart of truth. The other camp started from the principle that the poetry is the poet. In this they were right; but as they straightway proceeded to apply it wrongly, the principle made little difference to them. Shelley's poetry,

they said, is angelic. Therefore, Shelley was an angel. Q. E. D. I need hardly observe that Shelley's poetry is not angelic; except in the loose sense in which we may call a skylark's song angelic, though he is probably only assuring the universe that the sun rises every morning just to look at his (the skylark's) mate in her nest. However, they bowed down and worshipped Shelley the angel, until it was discovered that Shelley was not an angel. Thereupon this camp split into two sections. One section wandered disconsolate, finding no firm rest for the sole of its foot, and asking with Pilate, "What is truth?", while the other section imitated the conduct of the one-eyed Admiral on a certain famous occasion, and continued staunchly to worship the Shelley that never was on sea or land. Needless to say this latter camp, so lamentably divided, was of those who take to their hearts that sweetly pretty portrait evolved by a young lady of the true old "sweetly pretty"

school. I mean the portrait which Miss Curran gave to the world, with "A Present for a Good Girl" writ large across its face. A most sweet, sugar-candied Shelley as you shall see in a summer's day; entirely proper to be carried in school-girls' pockets and surreptitiously sucked during lesson-time. Alas! the sugar-candied Shelley has melted on their tongues, and there are horrid nasty things in it, and all the school-girls — male and female — are spitting and sputtering it out of their mouths. Poor sugar-candied Shelley! Poor little British school-girl! And oh! poor Poetry!

Yet that the "revelations" of recent years respecting Shelley *could* be revelations to any discerning reader of him, is to me, I confess, itself a revelation. The present writer's own broad wash of Shelley's character, made after his verse — that Veronica's veil whereon he wiped his bloody brows,[1] has never received from

[1] I hope no too literalising reader will, by pur-

these "revelations" anything beyond detail and sharpening. I can only conclude that even among genuine lovers of poetry, most are ignorant of the allowances necessary to be made in spelling backwards a poet's character from his work. It is (but no analogies I may advance can be exactly exact) like painting a vivid sunset, whose scheme of hues dipped in air and fire must be transposed into the opaque hues of earth. The poetry is the poet, true; but the poet how? In his hours of what, for lack of a better term, we call inspiration. (It is a pretentious term which I do not like, but I must needs use it.) Now, inspiration cannot alter a poet's character, cannot give him one quality which it did not find in him; but it can and does alter the aspect of his qualities, affect them in degree though not in kind. It sublimes and it concentrates. It sublimes, as light sublimes translucid color,

suing the figure into vigorous detail, where I meant but imagery, evolve never-meant blasphemy.

steeping the sere leaf in a luminous syrup of citron, and with fair saturation consecrating its very stains and dishonors into loveliness. So, too, permeated by inspiration, the soberer harmonies of the poet's quiescent spirit kindle with tinges more rarefied; so, too, the poet's very faults may by inspiration become subtilised into beauty, because there is revealed that soul of goodness which is often in evil, when the evil springs from weakness rather than viciousness.[2] But infiltrated with light or unlit, with inspiration or uninspired, it is the same leaf and the same spirit. And inspiration concentrates. Hence what is a power in the poet's writings may present itself as a frequent weakness in his

[2] Shelley's deeper moral evil betrays itself in his poems *as* evil. In those mermaid-peopled waters there is the occasional protrusion of an ugly tentacle from some unsuspected crevice. Very occasional; but sufficient to have shown his readers that search would surely disclose the unpleasant lurking thing. For over those waters was never raised the hand that was raised over "deep Galilee."

familiar intercourse. For when we scrutinise under the microscope a tenuous film of blood, we expect to see blood's accustomed splendid sanguine; and find instead a fluid of all but imperceptible strawy tint, in which float minute discs of palest buff color.

Among many considerations longer than can here be discussed, the above two must specially be recollected by him who would gauge a singer from his songs; or the admirer will probably be disappointed. That in the poet's verse allures, which in his intercourse may repel; that in the one is power, which may in the other become weakness. What quality dearer in Shelley's poetry to his admirers than the frailly delicate impressibility, sensitive to every flaw of opinion as a moistened cheek to the wind! Yet I incline to think that this very quality aids in alienating some critics of unquestioned gifts: and perhaps his admirers may better understand an effect at first sight so incomprehensible, if

they view this entrancing quality in its every-day dilution. The dilution can too readily be viewed in his letters. By a singular vagary the very leader of the forlorn hope against the poems held the letters up to admiration; and was answered by Mr. Swinburne that the letters were in reality "nice" letters, such as one would expect from a young lady. Mr. Swinburne might have gone farther. To myself, at least, Shelley's letters are often by no means "nice." Let frenzied Shelleians cast me headlong from whatever may be the English equivalent for the "steep Tarpeian," I will say my thought. The poet's letters are often effeminately sentimental; and by sentimental I mean, not fraught with sentiment, but fraught with sentimentality. They are sometimes of a mawkishness to writhe at. Personally, I love Shelley for this weakness: but I do so because I perceive it to be the unfermented juice of his genius, and therefore to be loved, not scorned; as we love,

not scorn, that physical weakness of woman by which her subtler distinctive qualities are almost conditioned. For it is this weakness which, under inspiration, makes the sensitive magic of his poetry. But lads notoriously *do* scorn the girl for her physical weakness. Lads, likewise, are notoriously blind or contemptuous to the subtler attractions which accompany it. And in regard to poetry of the Shelleian order, I fear that some of us remain lads to the end. God forbid, indeed, that the masculine element should fade from English letters! Poetry has an arm for her hirsute Dryden no less than for her soft-plumaged Shelley; and in this respect the present writer is one at heart with her. But it is the lad, not the man, who is perpetually pulling out his manhood, like a new watch, for everybody to see it; swaggering, hands in pockets, and saying "By Jove!"; cuffing his weaker brethren out of pure manliness, and making rude remarks to his sisters, because he is not such

a "muff" as to care about girls. What if we find writers behaving thus in literature? Shall we not begin to suspect them of an uneasy misgiving that there is a flaw somewhere in their virility? Now, there are critics who have this self-conscious masculinity, which is at times little less distressing than the chastity of the British Matron; men in whom the masculine element is intolerantly developed — fretfully, harassingly assertive. And they are apt to turn with veritable school-boy brutalism of impatient disdain from poetry like Shelley's: so devoid of the virile element as to be almost sexless, while yet — like his own Hermaphrodite — it unites the grace of either sex. Was it any conscious intention on Shelley's part (one wonders) which has made Hermaphroditus a personification, an allegory, of his own genius? For such it is. Suffer me, reader, to quote those glorious passages from the "Witch of Atlas," that you may read them in the light of this suggestion:

Then by strange art she kneaded fire and
snow
Together, tempering the repugnant mass
With liquid love — all things together grow
Thro' which the harmony of love can pass;
And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow —
A living Image which did far surpass
In beauty that bright shape of vital stone
Which drew the heart out of Pygmalion.

A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
It seemed to have developt no defect
Of either sex, yet all the grace of both,—
In gentleness and strength its limbs were
deckt;
The bosom lightly swelled with its full
youth,
The countenance was such as might select
Some artist that his skill should never die,
Imaging forth such perfect purity.

From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid
wings,
Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere
Tipt with the speed of liquid lightnings,
Dyed in the ardors of the atmosphere:

She led her creature to the boiling springs
Where the light boat was moored, and said:
"Sit here!"
And pointed to the prow, and took her seat
Beside the rudder, with opposing feet.

And ever as she went, the Image lay
With folded wings and unawakened eyes;
And o'er its gentle countenance did play
The busy dreams, as thick as summer flies,
Chasing the rapid smiles that would not stay,
And drinking the warm tears, and the sweet sighs
Inhaling, which, with busy murmur vain,
They had aroused from that full heart and brain.

She called "Hermaphroditus!"— and the pale
And heavy hue which slumber could extend
Over its lips and eyes, as on the gale
A rapid shadow from a slope of grass,
Into the darkness of the stream did pass.

And it unfurled its heaven-coloured pinions,
With stars of fire spotting the stream below;

And from above into the Sun's dominions
Flinging a glory, like the golden glow
In which Spring clothes her emerald-wingéd minions,
All interwoven with fine feathery snow
And moonlight splendour of intensest rime,
With which frost paints the pines in winter time.

And then it winnowed the Elysian air
Which ever hung about that Lady bright,
With its ethereal vans — and speeding there,
Like a star up the torrent of the night,
Or a swift eagle in the morning glare
Breasting the whirlwind with impetuous flight,
The pinnace, oared by those enchanted wings,
Clove the fierce streams towards their upper springs.

If critics revolt from a muse such as this, so spirit-like in its absence of bone and muscle, a muse whose crystalline veins run ichor, whose heart is rather red palpitant fire than red palpitant flesh; we are not

surprised should they visit harshly the weaknesses and piteousnesses of the poet apart from his muse. If with the wine they are not made drunken, no marvel though they find the grapes insipid. But that any lover of that muse should turn in scorn from those weaknesses, can only spring of ignorance. Understanding people must have forecasted what would surely come to Keats and Shelley from that terrible ordeal of the unroofed *vie intime*.

> When he descended down the Mount,
> His countenance was most divine.

Rarely arrives the favored poet-soul of whom such can be sung. Most often we shall see instead but the rusty stains where the fire has seared his locks. If this were better comprehended, we should have less of the belief that poets in their poetry assume or create for themselves an ideal character. They do nothing of the kind. When this *has* been done (as Byron did it) the result is false poetry. The differ-

ence between the true poet in his poetry and in his letters or personal intercourse is just the difference between two states of the one man; between the metal live from the forge and the metal chill. But chill or glowing, the metal is equally itself. If difference there be, it is the metal in glow that is the truer to itself. For, cold, it may be overlaid with dirt, obscured with dust; but afire, all these are scorched away.

Coupling, as I have done, the names of the two English poets who have possessed in largest measure that frail might of sensibility, suggests another problem which — before concluding these stray thoughts — I should like to put forward, though I cannot answer. What may be the effect of scenic and climatic surroundings on the character and development of genius such as this? Had he drunk from the cup of Italy before, not after, the cup of death, how would it have wrought on the passionate sensitiveness of Keats? Would his poetry have changed in kind or power?

Cooped in an English city, what would have betided the dewy sensitiveness of Shelley? Could he have created the "Revolt of Islam" had he not been risen warm from the lap of the poets' land? Could he have waxed inebriate with the heady choruses of "Prometheus Unbound,"

Like tipsy Joy, that reels with tossing head,

if for the Baths of Caracalla with their "flowering ruins," the Italian spring and "the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication," had been substituted the blear streets of London; the Avernian birds, the anæmic herbage, of our parks; the snivel of our catarrhal May; and the worthless I. O. U. which a sharping English spring annually presents to its confiding creditors? Climate and surroundings must needs influence vital energy; and upon the storage of this fuel, which the imaginative worker burns at a fiercer heat than other workers, depends

a poet's sustained power. With waning health the beauty of Keats's poetry distinctly waned. Nor can it be but that beings of such susceptibility as these two should transmute their color, like the Ceylonese lizard, with the shifting color of their shifted station. I have fancied, at times, a degree of analogy between the wandering sheep Shelley and the Beloved Disciple. Both are usually represented with a certain feminine beauty.[3] Both made the constant burthen of their teaching, "My little children, love one another." (It is true that Shelley added a second precept, hardly perhaps contemplated by the Apostle,—"My little boys and girls, love one another.") Both have similarities in their cast of genius. The

[3] "Represented;" For though Shelley's face seems unquestionably to have had a feminine character, whether it really possessed any physical beauty whatever is a question on which a dozen portraits by a dozen school-misses could not satisfy me.

Son of Man walks amidst the golden candlesticks almost as the profane poet would have seen him walk:

"His head and his hairs were white as wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters."

Receive from Shelley, out of many kindred phantasies, this:

White
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright
snow,
. . . . . .
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scatter'd in string.

And finally, with somewhat the same large elemental vision they take each their stand; leaning athwart the ramparts of creation to watch the bursting of overseeded worlds, and the mown stars falling behind Time the scytheman in broad swarths along the Milky Way. Now, it is

shown that the inspired revelations of the inspired Evangelist are tinged with imagery by the scenery of Patmos. If, instead of looking from Patmos into the eyes of Nature, he had been girt within the walls of a Roman dungeon, might not his eagle have mewed a feather? we should have had the great Apocalyptic prophecy; should we have had the great Apocalyptic poem? For the poetical greatness of a Biblical book has no necessary commensuration with its religious importance; Job is greater than Isaiah. Might even St. John have sung less highly, though not less truly, from out the glooms of the Tullianum? Perhaps so it is; and perhaps one who hymned the angel Israfel spoke wider truth than he knew.

> The ecstasies above
> With thy burning measures suit —
> Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
> With the fervor of thy lute —
> Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is thine, but this
Is a world of sweets and sours;
Our flowers are merely — flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
Where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.

CRASHAW

RICHARD CRASHAW, Canon of Loretto; an Englishman, a Catholic, and a poet who lent inspiration for "Christabel." Yet an unpopular poet; and a poet whose unpopularity is born very much of his own faults. Cowley, his friend and brother-singer, wrote upon him a fine and Dryden-like elegy; his work has won the warm admiration of many eminent men, prominent among whom is said to be Cardinal Newman; but except by such professed students of literature it is hardly read.

Like his predecessor, George Herbert, he was a religious writer; and Herbert has still a large following among the admirers of that poetry which is exemplified at the present day by Keble and New-

man. Crashaw, though a poet of much higher flight, has no such clientage. Something must be allowed for his Catholicity, into which he threw himself with the tender ardor of his nature; and the bulk of his poetry was written after his conversion. Yet it may be doubted whether this is the sole or chief reason. The truth is (though it may have been otherwise during his own age and the rampant influence of Donne) that he is not now in touch with the very class to whom his work makes apparent appeal. And the lovers of poetry for its own sake, to whom he really appeals, having learned by melancholy experience how little religious verse is anything more than verse, are repelled rather than attracted by professedly religious poetry.[1] Between these two stools, we think, Crashaw falls to the

[1] *By professedly religious poetry,* not necessarily by *religion.* It is not the presence of religion, but the too prevalent absence of poetry, which is the repellant quality.

ground. Herbert is a smaller poet, but Herbert is a greater religious writer. Crashaw's genius, in spite of his often ecstatic devotion, is essentially a secular genius. He writes on religious themes; but he writes of them as Milton wrote in the "Ode on the Nativity," or Rossetti in the "Ave." Milton speaks with the gravest, Rossetti with the warmest reverence; yet they are allured, not by the religious lessons, but by the poetical grandeur or beauty of their subject; and it is the same with Crashaw. He sings the tears of Magdalen. But he sings them much as Shelley sings his "Skylark"; stanza following stanza in a dropping rain of fancies, as Shelley expands, lustred plume by plume, the peacock splendor of his imagery. He sings the Stable of Bethlehem. But he does not sing its lessons of humility, poverty, self-abnegation; he sings of the Divine light shining from the Child, of the snows offering their whiteness and the seraphim their roseate

wings, to strew the heavenly Infant's couch. The themes are religious, the poetry beautiful; but it is not what people are accustomed to understand by religious verse.

Apart, however, from a disadvantage compatible with unblemished excellence, there is, it must be conceded, a just reason for Crashaw's unpopularity; a reason which excludes the charge of unmerited neglect. He has written no perfect poems, though some perfect poetry, and *that* is discontinuous. His faults are grave, exasperatingly prominent, and — throughout large portions of his work — are not merely present as flaws, but constitute an intimate alloy. The consequent vitiation of his nevertheless great beauty alienates general readers, and — unless they come prepared to give him special attention — discourages even poetical readers. For there are, in regard to verse, two classes of readers. The general reader, attracted by the accidents rather

than the essence of poetry, regards the poet much as a barrel-organ to reel off *his* (the reader's) favorite tunes, or is affected by him in proportion as he mirrors the broad interests common to all humanity. But the poetical reader, as we have called him, is of kin to the poet. He is born with the lyre not in his hand, but in his bosom; not for his own touch, but to thrill in sympathy with the swept chords of all singers. He loves poetry for its poetry. To the first class, Crashaw, were he as faultless as he is faulty, could never be of interest, owing to his deficiency in the human element, to the ethereal insubstantialities of his genius. But poetical readers unfamiliar with him may be stimulated to make a pleasant acquaintance, if we bring together some typical specimens of his excellence dismantled, so far as possible, of its parasitic growths.

Since because of this plan his defects will not come conspicuously before the reader, it is all the more necessary to ex-

plain in what these defects consist; and to warn the intending student that in the original they will confront him intermittently, demanding that habitual allowance which we make for infantile deficiencies of technical knowledge in early Italian painters. The explanation is simple. Crashaw riots in conceits. Originally the word "conceit" signified merely a detached cameo-like image, such as form the bulk of Shelley's "Skylark." An Elizabethan critic would have styled that "an excellent conceited poem," and he would have been right. But we use the term in its modern and opprobrious sense, according to which it means an image marked by high-wrought ingenuity rather than beauty or appropriateness. From Donne to Dryden most of our poets indulged in this vice; and Crashaw only followed the fashion of his day. But he sublimated his errors as he sublimated his poetry, beyond the level of his brother-singers. So, in a large canvas, faults of

draughtsmanship comparatively unnoticeable in a cabinet-picture become painfully apparent because magnified by the increase of scale. The perverted ardor of his devotion to the false fashion, no less than its contrast with his exquisite powers, render it peculiarly intolerable. It corrupted his judgment so that years but rooted the fault more deeply; and in his maturest poems he cannot write twenty consecutive lines without lapsing from finished delicacy to errors of taste which make the reader writhe. Trailing in exasperating profusion over his most charming verse are lines of which the following present a perhaps extreme example. They refer to the weeping eyes of St. Mary Magdalen.

> And now where'er He strays,
>
> * * * * *
>
> He's followed by two faithful fountains;
> *Two walking baths, two weeping motions,*
> *Portable and compendious oceans.*
>
> . . . . .

When the reader has recovered, he may take this, which is not an extreme example.

> Does thy sweet-breathed prayer
> Up in clouds of incense climb?
> Still at each sigh, that is each stop,
> A bead, that is a tear, does drop.

It *might* have been a fair image; but the hard elaboration of detailed touch ruins it in the expression. And here, finally, is a specimen of the high-raised conceits in which he abounds; high-raised to such a degree that one editor, Dr. Grosart, quotes it with admiration. To us it appears so essentially fantastic in its fancy, and strained in expression, as to merit only the phrase which we have applied to it.

> Heavens thy fair eyes be;
> Heavens of ever-falling stars.
> 'Tis seed-time still with thee;
> And stars thou sow'st whose harvest dares
> Promise the earth to countershine
> Whatever makes Heaven's forehead fine.

To the foregoing indictment we must add, that there is often a feminine effusiveness, and almost hysterical fantasy in his religious raptures, which is a weakness complementary to his sensitive tenderness.

These disfigurements lie thick on Crashaw's poetry; or its wine would need no bush. But there is rich compensation for those who will move aside the rank undergrowth. Every now and then the rare genius of the man shines away the infectious vapors of contemporary influence which stain it with eclipse; and he is transfigured before our eyes. His very faults

> Suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange;

his conceits into fancies of delicate grace, his tortured language into the most refined sorcery of expression, his emotional femineity into rarefied ethereality of sentiment. Fancy, expression, lofty ideal sentiment — these sum sufficiently fairly

the qualities which we claim for him at his best.[2] It is perhaps his abundant fancy which has caused his admirers to compare him with Shelley, a comparison to which we do not entirely adhere, while we admit some resemblance, stronger in certain moods than in others. His fondness for stringing together a series of images on a given subject, which often makes a whole poem a veritable air with variations, recalls Shelley's habit of weaving similar chaplets. But Crashaw's imagery is fragile and lily-like, the offspring of fancy; Shelley's rich and glowing, the offspring of imagination. Dr. Grosart, however, who strongly upholds the theory of Crashaw's resemblance to Shelley, credits the elder poet in the highest measure with this very quality of imagination; and if we could agree in such a judgment, we should have no difficulty in accepting the

[2] A fourth quality — metrical beauty — not being an intellectual one, we reserve it for separate consideration.

theory. It is partly because we regard imagination as one of Shelley's most essential attributes, but hold Crashaw's dominant faculty to be fancy, that we dissent from the current view.[3] Yet since Shelley's fancy is hardly less striking than his imagination, there still remains ground for comparison.

Another reason for our dissent is to be found in Crashaw's expression. If it be remembered that we are now treating of him *at his best*, we may say unhesitatingly that it is perfect in its kind. But that kind belongs, we think, to another school than Shelley's, a school of which the supreme modern example is Coleridge. All great poets at their finest are perfect in expression; but as the colorist's gift may in itself reach genius, so a small number of poets are so unique in expression that their diction alone is almost

[3] We use the terms "imagination" and "fancy" (as does Dr. Grosart) in the sense defined by Coleridge.

poetry. These masters of diction may be divided into two classes. The first class aim at enthralment by the display of their art; the second, by its concealment. Painting exhibits an analogy. There are painters like Rubens, who astonish by the masterly revelation of their brushwork; there are painters like Titian, who astonish by the mystery of its achievement. To the first class belong Milton, Gray, Keats, Tennyson, and Rossetti. It is occasionally objected to some of them — as for instance, to Tennyson — that they do *not* sufficiently conceal their art. But in reality the very delight of such work resides in the constant sense of profound skill, of rich research, of splendid vesture fitly worn, and beauty incarnating herself in subtly chosen form. It is only when the kingly robes are worn by an unkingly man, when thought falls below expression, that the richness grows offensive. And when that occurs, it will generally be found that the richness is an imitative richness.

A poet with genius enough to form a diction of his own, has genius enough to know what to say in it. To the second class belong by a natural affinity most of the subtle, skiey poets, with two striking exceptions — Chaucer, who does belong to it, and Shelley who but partially belongs to it. It is distinguished by a choiceness known only from its effects, a delicate witchery which defies analysis; a diction, indeed, which almost effects the miracle of speaking, like music, to the soul rather than the understanding. Beauty does not incarnate herself: she descends in the spirit. This class includes Chaucer, Spenser, Collins, Coleridge, and at times, especially in some of his smaller lyrics, Shelley. More generally he belongs to the first class, with the difference that while others of that class are marked by a vivid concentration, he is marked by an opulent diffuseness of splendor. One poet alone is master at will of either style — that despot of language, Shakespeare.

Crashaw's diction, when most excellent, belongs to the latter school; and in this quality he is often as nearly akin to Coleridge as a lyric can be to a narrative poet. It is the true wonder-working diction; and when his ideas free themselves from conceit sufficiently to give his diction a chance, the combination is unsurpassable for sweet felicity. Take as a specimen a selection of stanzas from the poem on St. Mary Magdalen called "The Weeper." We have so arranged them as to form a continuous whole; while the reader will perceive by the numbering of the stanzas how many we have omitted.

VII

The dew no more will weep,
The primrose's pale cheek to deck;
The dew no more will sleep,
Nuzzled in the lily's neck;
Much rather would it be thy tear,
And leave them both to tremble here.

X

Not in the Evening's eyes,
When they red with weeping are
For the Sun that dies,
Sits Sorrow with a face so fair.
Nowhere but here did ever meet
Sweetness so sad, sadness so sweet.

XI

Sadness, all the while
She sits in such a throne as this,
Can do nought but smile,
Nor believes she Sadness is:
Gladness itself would be more glad
To be made so sweetly sad.

XV

Well does the May that lies
Smiling in thy cheeks confess
The April in thine eyes;
Mutual sweetness they express.
No April e'er lent kinder showers,
Nor May returned more faithful flowers.

XXIII

O precious prodigal!
Fair spendthrift of thyself! thy measure
(Merciless love!) is all,
Even to the last pearl in thy treasure:
All places, times, and seasons be
Thy tears' sweet opportunity.

XXIV

Does the day-star rise?
Still thy tears do fall and fall.
Does Day close his eyes?
Still the fountain weeps for all.
Let Night or Day do what they will,
Thou hast thy task: thou weepest still.

XXVIII

Not "so long she livèd,"
Shall thy tomb report of thee;
But, "so long she grievèd:"
Thus must we date thy memory.
Others by moments, months, and years,
Measure their ages; thou, by tears.

The way in which the beautiful opening lines of stanza VII. are marred by the concluding conceit to which they lead up, is unfortunately characteristic of Crashaw. But stanza X. is lovely throughout, perfect both in fancy and expression to the charmingly phrased final couplet. The secular cast of Crashaw's genius is well illustrated in these excerpts; and the more strikingly to enforce it we will show the reader, by a parallel treatment of a love-poem, how entirely the difference between the two is a difference of subject. The "Wishes to a Supposed Mistress" is one of his few secular poems, and of his only two love-poems: it is, moreover, as happy an inspiration as he has left us, with a smaller proportion of conceits than usual. So far as is consistent with our limits, we have retained the finest stanzas, and omitted only those which are blemished.

A RENEGADE POET

1

Whoe'er she be —
That not impossible She
That shall command my heart and me:

2

Where'er she lie,
Locked up from mortal eye
In shady leaves of destiny:

3

Till that ripe birth
Of studied Fate step forth,
And teach her fair steps to our earth:

4

Till that divine
Idea take a shrine
Of crystal flesh, through which to shine:

5

Meet you her, my Wishes,
Bespeak her to my blisses,
And be ye called my absent kisses.

6

I wish her Beauty,
That owes not all its duty
To gaudy tire, or glist'ring shoe-tie:

11

A Cheek, where youth
And blood, with pen of truth,
Write what the reader sweetly ru'th.

16

Tresses, that wear
Jewels but to declare
How much themselves more precious are:

21

Smiles, that can warm
The blood, yet teach a charm,
That chastity shall take no harm.

22

Blushes, that bin
The burnish of no sin,
Nor flames of aught too hot within.

26

Days that need borrow
No part of their good morrow,
From a fore-spent night of sorrow:

27

Days that in spite
Of darkness, by the light
Of a clear mind are day all night.

29

Life that dares send
A challenge to his end,
And when it comes, say, "Welcome, friend!"

30

Sydneian showers
Of sweet discourse, whose powers
Can crown old Winter's head with flowers.

31

Soft silken hours,
Open suns, shady bowers;
'Bove all, nothing within that lowers.

32

Whate'er delight
Can make Day's forehead bright,
Or give down to the wings of Night.

35

I wish her store
Of worth may leave her poor
Of wishes; and I wish — no more.

36

Now, if Time knows
That Her, whose radiant brows
Weave them a garland of my vows;

38

Her, that dares be
What these lines wish to see;
I seek no further, it is She.

39

'Tis She, and here,
Lo! I unclothe and clear
My Wishes' cloudy character.

40

May she enjoy it
Whose merit dare apply it,
But modesty dares still deny it!

41

Such worth as this is
Shall fix my flying Wishes,
And determine them to kisses.

42

Let her full glory,
My fancies, fly before ye;
Be ye my fictions — but her story.

A typical specimen of his best religious work is that "Hymn of the Nativity," to which we alluded in the opening of our article. We can only, in our remaining space, draw together three or four of the most admirable stanzas, which we place before the reader without further preface. They are sung by the shepherds in alternate verses.

BOTH

We saw Thee in Thy balmy nest,
  Young dawn of our eternal Day!
We saw Thine eyes break from Their East
  And chase the trembling shades away.
We saw Thee; and we blessed the sight;
  We saw Thee by Thine Own sweet light.

* * * * *

TITYRUS

I saw the curled drops, soft and slow,
  Come hovering o'er the place's head;
Offering their whitest sheets of snow
  To furnish the fair Infant's bed:
Forbear, said I, be not too bold,
  Your fleece is white, but 'tis too cold.

THYRSIS

I saw the obsequious Seraphim,
  Their rosy fleece of fire bestow,
For well they now can spare their wing,
  Since Heaven itself lies here below.
Well done, said I; but are you sure
  Your down so warm will pass for pure?

BOTH

We saw Thee in Thy balmy nest,
  Bright dawn of our eternal Day!
We saw Thine eyes break from Their East
  And chase the trembling shades away.
We saw Thee; and we blessed the sight;
We saw Thee by Thine Own sweet light.

FULL CHORUS

Welcome, all wonders in one sight!
  Eternity shut in a span!
Summer in Winter, Day in Night!
  Heaven in Earth, and God in man!
Great little One! Whose all-embracing birth
Lifts Earth to Heaven, stoops Heaven to Earth.

Notice that most apt epithet, "curled drops." Of all the poets who have described snow, we do not recollect one besides Crashaw who has recorded this characteristic trait of snow-flakes. They *are* curled. Pluck one of the inner petals

from a rose, lay it with its concavity uppermost, and you have a sufficiently close resemblance to the general form of a snowflake when falling through the air. It is easy to see the reason of this form. The pressure of the atmosphere on the lower surface of the descending flake necessarily tends to curve upward its edges. But Crashaw alone has thought of noting the fact.

This notice would be incomplete did we not refer to our poet's metre. It is worthy of observation that all the poets whom we have named in our second class are as remarkable for their versification as their expression. Chaucer, of course, founded English rhyming heroics; while Spenser, Collins, and Coleridge are masters of metrical combination. Crashaw is a worthy companion to these great names; not, it is true, as regards the invention and treatment of irregular metres, but in the cunning originality with which he manipulates established forms. He is un-

equal even here: it would be easy to cite examples of harshness and want of finish: but when he does himself justice, it is not too much to say that his numbers are unsurpassed by anything of the kind in the language. His employment (in the "Hymn to St. Teresa" and its companion, "The Bleeding Heart") of those mixed four-foot Iambics and Trochaics so often favored by modern poets, marks an era in the metre. Coleridge (in the "Biographia Literaria") adopts an excellent expression to distinguish measures which follow the changes of the sense from those which are regulated by a pendulum-like beat or tune — however *new* the tune — overpowering all intrinsic variety. The former he styles *numerous* versification. Crashaw is beautifully numerous, attaining the most delicate music by veering pause and modulation — a

> "Miser of sound and syllable, no less
> Than Midas of his coinage."

We have said advisedly that the "St. Teresa" marks an era in its metre. For Coleridge was largely indebted to it, and acknowledged his debt. He had, he said, those lines constantly in his mind when writing the second part of "Christabel"; if, indeed, by some inexplicable mental process, it did not suggest the first idea of the whole poem. The student who reads in the light of this declaration those portions of the second part which are composed in ordinary couplet-rhyming Tetrameters, Iambic and Trochaic, will perceive how true it is. Both expression and metre have manifestly been closely studied by the modern writer. The diction of the two poets is here markedly akin; and the versification is not so much akin as identical. The greatest metrical master of the nineteenth century was for once content to imitate such exquisite lines as these: —

Scarce has she learned to lisp the name
Of martyr; yet she thinks it shame
Life should so long play with that breath

Which spent can buy so brave a death.
She never undertook to know
What Death with Love should have to do;
Nor has she e'er yet understood
Why to show love she should shed blood;
Yet though she cannot tell you why,
She can love, and she can die.

Coleridge has done as well; better even Coleridge could not do. For fuller conviction, compare the lines which we are about to quote with those lines on the dreaming Christabel terminating in the lovely phrase

"Both blue eyes, more bright than clear,
Each about to have a tear."

This phrase is essentially identical in its art with a line of Crashaw's which we italicise. Each is singularly felicitous in its expression; and each, if carried one step further, would have been a conceit.

All thy old woes shall now smile on thee,
And thy pains sit bright on thee,
All thy sorrows here shall shine,

All thy sufferings be divine:
Tears shall take comfort, and turn gems,
And wrongs repent to diadems.

Let us end by quoting in its entirety Crashaw's second and very charming love-poem, the "Horoscope." It is more nearly free from conceit than any other complete poem. Indeed the very motive of it is so essentially a slight fantasy that a little fantasy in the execution appears almost permissible, because harmonious with the central idea. The last two stanzas of the fanciful trifle could not well be improved in their airy grace: the subtle music and the subtle expression seem to beget each other: —

Love, brave Virtue's younger brother,
Erst hath made my heart a mother;
She consults the conscious spheres
To calculate her young son's years.
She asks, if sad, or saving powers,
Gave omen to his infant hours;
She asks each star that then stood by,
If poor Love shall live or die.

Ah, my heart, is that the way?
Are these the beams that rule thy day?
Thou know'st a face in whose each look
Beauty lays ope Love's fortune-book;
On whose fair revolutions wait
The obsequious motions of man's fate:
Ah, my heart, her eyes and she
Have taught thee new astrology;
Howe'er Love's native hours were set,
Whatever starry synod met —
'Tis in the mercy of her eye
If poor Love shall live or die.

If those sharp rays putting on
Points of death, bid Love be gone:
(Though the Heavens in council sat
To crown an uncontrollèd fate,
Though their best aspects twined upon
The kindest constellation,
Cast amorous glances on his birth,
And whispered the confederate Earth
To pave his paths with all the good
That warms the bed of youth and blood)
Love hath no plea against her eye:
Beauty frowns, and Love must die.

But if her milder influence move,
And gild the hopes of humble Love:
(Though Heaven's inauspicious eye
Lay black on Love's nativity;
Though every diamond in Jove's crown
Fixed his forehead to a frown:)
Her eye a strong appeal can give,
Beauty smiles, and Love shall live.

O, if Love shall live, O where
But in her eye, or in her ear,
In her breast, or in her breath,
Shall I hide poor Love from Death?
For in the life ought else can give,
Love shall die, although he live.

Or, if Love shall die, O where
But in her eye, or in her ear,
In her breath, or in her breast,
Shall I build his funeral nest?
While Love shall thus entombèd lie,
Love shall live, although he die!

The melody of those two final stanzas is bewitching. Were six more delectably-modulated lines ever written for the rav-

ishment of all sensitive ears? No less noticeable are they as an example of delightful repetition, in which (as in nearly all judicious echoing) the verbal repetition corresponds to a repetition of idea. So artfully precise is the iteration of cadence, that in the respectively parallel lines of the two verses, the very position of the *caesurae* is exactly preserved.

Those who are able and willing to sift the gold in so rich a stream as that from whose sands we have washed these few handfuls, will assuredly experience no disappointment in the work of the Catholic whom even the Protestant Cowley could address as "Poet and Saint."

AUBREY DE VERE

THE death of Mr. Aubrey de Vere removes from us not only a poet of distinction, but the last link with the poetic past of the early nineteenth century — a poet who held memories of conversations with Wordsworth, and had received commendation from the lips of the men who revolutionised English poetry. Wordsworth was one of those who seldom commend any poetry which is not akin to their own, and it can readily be surmised, therefore, in what school the young poet graduated. Shelley influenced him, as is visible in his first poem, *The Search after Proserpine;* and he profoundly admired Coleridge, but the supreme planet was Wordsworth. To that tradition he remained unswervingly faithful through his long life

and all changes of poetic fashion: when other gods were enthroned in the market-place his worship was unchanged. He lived to see the Wordsworthian tradition revived by Mr. William Watson, and to receive the homage of that poet. But if Mr. Watson was the last, he was not the first poet to render such homage. Landor hailed the rise of a new poet in some characteristic verses when the *Search after Proserpine* appeared; Sir Henry Taylor was not less emphatic in his admiration; and at a later day so totally antagonistic a poet as Mr. Swinburne wrote in generous praise of him. The praise was the more generous because De Vere, never having been a fashion, then and throughout the close of his career had become *vieux jeu* to the modern critic. Yet Mr. Swinburne does not praise ignorantly, and it may be surmised that Aubrey de Vere does not deserve the tranquil neglect into which he had passed.

"Graceful"— that most damning of

faint praises — was the adjective stocked for him by the critics on the rare occasions when he came before them in the latter years. It is about as inappropriate an adjective as could be affixed to him. Neither in his best nor his worst (and it may be admitted that his later work showed him at his weakest) could anything so light be predicated of his general manner. His faults and his merits were mainly those of the Wordsworthian school, and no one has yet thought of calling Wordsworth graceful. A great poet Aubrey de Vere was not. One who follows a master with such unswerving fidelity as he followed the Rydal singer must be content with the lower praise of a derivative poet. The Wordsworth whom he followed was not the Wordsworth of the simple lyrics, with their close touch upon the human heart, but the later Wordsworth, who had openly broken in practice with his own theory of poetic diction — he of the austerely grand odes, with their leaven of classic English phrase, and he

also of the sonnets. Even on this side Mr. de Vere never reached or attempted any of those magical intimacies which in a line or a passage of the elder poet suddenly pierce the soul or thrill us with a sense of things divinely remote. Such a flash as

To me the meanest flower that blows can bring
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears,

was beyond him. Of warmth he was capable, especially in his younger days, but not of pathos or subtle suggestion. His general manner, it must be owned, was somewhat coldly grave. This was intensified by the defect which he shared with all Wordsworthian poets and Wordsworth himself; he was hopelessly prolix, quite unaware when he was not inspired, and left his true poetry to welter amidst masses of dignifiedly prosaic verse. More of a conscious artist than his master, he never fell into such bathetic depths as did Wordsworth; but neither did he soar so high, and

he could be nearly as dull. Yet the Shelleian influence — which is good for too respectable poets — touched him at times with a lightness unknown to the Lake poet. It was in such a lyric mood that he captured Mr. Swinburne's sympathy. Finally, when his best is observingly distilled, it is not only very good indeed, but in one or two instances surprisingly high. One of his odes is fine, with passages of absolute grandeur; and another, though in need of compression, not much below it. Some of his sonnets are only not among the best in that kind.

It is, indeed, by the best of his lyrical pieces that he should be judged, rather than by the long narrative or dramatic poems on which he expended so much labor. Of one little lyric, Mr. Swinburne has said that it was the only poem not by Shelley which he might conceivably mistake for Shelley. Mr. Swinburne is not one to err in praise, and assuredly the poem deserves it; but the terms of that praise are apt to be a little

unmeasured, as the reader may think them here:

When I was young, I said to Sorrow,
"Come, and I will play with thee:"—
He is near me now all day;
And at night returns to say,
"I will come again to-morrow,
I will come and stay with thee."

Through the woods we walk together;
His soft footsteps rustle nigh me;
To shield an unregarded head,
He hath built a winter shed;
And all night in rainy weather,
I hear his gentle breathings by me.

That is a very charming lyric, all great comparisons apart. Beautiful, with a grace of tenderness which goes near to that pathos denied to Mr. de Vere, is "Death in Child-birth":

Sweet Martyr of thine Infant and thy Love,
O what a death is thine!
Is this to die? Then, Love! henceforth ap-
prove

This, this of all thy gifts the most divine.
Toll no death-bell! Matrons, cover
Her white bed with flowers all over;
With the dark, cool violets swathing
A full bosom mother-hearted;
Under lily shadows bathing
Brows whose anguish hath departed.
Life with others, Death with thee
Plays a grave game smilingly.

I take the liberty to close the poem where I would that Mr. de Vere had closed it. Unfortunately, with an ill-judgment too characteristic of his school, he follows what should have been a lovely close by four poor and commonplace lines, ruining the effect. Few poets of this later day would make such an error in taste. It is the Elizabethans who have inspired this lyric; but he is altogether Wordsworthian in this example of his sonnets:

For we the mighty mountain-plains have trod
Both in the glow of sunset and sunrise;
And lighted by the moon of Southern skies!

The snow-white torrent of the thundering
flood
We two have watched together: In the wood
We two have felt the warm tears dim our eyes
While zephyrs softer than an infant's sighs
Ruffled the light air of our solitude!
O Earth, maternal Earth, and thou, O
Heaven,
And Night first-born, who now, e'en now,
dost waken
The host of stars, this constellated train!
Tell me if those can ever be forgiven,
Those abject, who together have partaken
These Sacraments of Nature — and in vain!

"Zephyrs softer than an infant's sighs" one could well have spared; but many such conventional lines would be atoned for by the splendid sestet of this sonnet, worthy of Wordsworth at his best. In a vein hardly less fine are parts of "The Year of Sorrow," a series of poems on an Irish famine-year, which calls the snow to bury the outcasts:

Bend o'er them, white-robed Acolyte!
Put forth thine hand from cloud and mist,
And minister the last sad rite,
Where altar there is none, nor priest.

But Mr. de Vere rises to his most imaginative heights in the "Ode to the Daffodil" and the "Autumnal Ode." That to the daffodil:

A sacristan whose gusty taper
Flashes through earliest morning vapour,

would bear compacting, but is full of fine passages — not least of which is the close:

When in her vidual chastity the year
With frozen memories of the sacred past
Her doors and heart makes fast,
And loves no flower save those that deck the bier: —
Ere yet the blossomed sycamore
With golden surf is curdled o'er;
Ere yet the birch against the blue
Her silken tissue weaves anew:
Thou com'st while, meteor-like 'mid fens, the weed

Swims, wan in light; while sleet-showers
whitening glare;—
Weeks ere, by river brims, new furred, the
reed
Leans its green javelin level in the air.

Child of the strong and strenuous East!
Now scattered wide o'er dusk hill bases,
Now massed in broad, illuminate spaces;—
Torchbearer at a wedding-feast
Whereof thou mayst not be partaker,
But mime, at most, and merrymaker;—
Phosphor of an ungrateful sun
That rises but to bid thy lamp begone:—
Farewell! I saw
Writ large on woods and lawns to-day that
Law
Which back remands thy race and thee
To hero-haunted shades of dark Persephone.

The mixture of Shelleian fantasy with a certain classic dignity and composure is admirable. But yet finer is the "Autumnal Ode" in both qualities. It sings of:

The nymphs that urge the seasons on their
round,
. . . . . .

They that drag April by the rain-bright hair
O'er March's frosty bound,
They by whose warm and furtive hand unwound
The cestus falls from May's new-wedded breast.
Of the wind-worked ruin of the trees:
Yon poplar-grove is troubled! Bright and bold
Babbled his cold leaves in the July breeze.
As though above our heads a runnel rolled:
His mirth is o'er; subdued by stern October
He counts his lessening wealth, and, sadly sober,
Tinkles his querulous tablets of wan gold.

I restore the excellent original word, for (again ill-judging!) the poet altered "querulous" to "minute tablets"— a sore mishap! Then, ascending to the thought of death and the hereafter, he sings of those who climb:

The penitential mountain's ebon stair:
The earth-shadow clips the halo round their hair:

And as lone outcasts watch a moon that wanes
Receding slowly o'er their native plains,
Thus watch they wistful, something far but fair.

Lastly, he ends in a magnificent and organ-rolling close:

— Hark! the breeze increases:
The sunset forests, catching sudden fire,
Flash, swell, and sing, a million-organed choir:
Roofing the West, rich clouds in glittering fleeces
O'er-arch ethereal spaces and divine
Of heaven's clear hyaline.
No dream is this! Beyond that radiance golden
God's sons I see, His armies bright and strong,
The ensanguined Martyrs here with palms high holden,
The Virgins there, a lily-lifting throng!
The Splendours nearer draw. In choral blending
The Prophets' and the Apostles' chant I hear;

I see the City of the Just descending,
With gates of pearl and diamond bastions sheer.
The walls are agate and chalcedony;
On jacinth street and jasper parapet
The unwa ing light is light of Deity,
Not beam of lessening moon or suns that set.
That undeciduous forestry of spires
Lets fall no leaf! those lights can never range:
Saintly fruitions and divine desires
Are blended there in rapture without change.
Man was not made for things that leave us,
For that which goeth and returneth,
For hopes that lift us yet deceive us,
For love that wears a smile yet mourneth;
Not for fresh forests from the dead leaves springing,
The cyclic re-creation which, at best,
Yields us — betrayal still to promise clinging —
But tremulous shadows of the Realm of Rest:
For things immortal Man was made,

God's image, latest from His hand,
Co-heir with Him Who in Man's flesh arrayed,
Holds o'er the worlds the Heavenly-Human wand:
His portion this — sublime
To stand where access none hath Space or Time,
Above the starry host, the Cherub band,
To stand — to advance — and, after all, to stand!

Comment on this is needless. Had Aubrey de Vere always, or even often, been thus inspired, one would not have denied him the title of a great poet. After this it were superfluous to dwell on those longer poems, narrative or dramatic, which leave as a whole but a languid impression, despite beautiful bursts of incidental poetry. His title to the name of poet is in such things as I have quoted. Only the blind can read and doubt.

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

IN Mr. W. E. Henley has passed away a brilliant man of letters, a distinguished poet and essayist, who never gained (how should he in this our day?) his due recognition from the dormant many, while from the bright and alert few he was accorded eagerly almost more than his due recognition. By the intellectual flower of young England, so much of which passed under his personal influence and control, he was worshipped the other side of idolatry. To all these, to those who clustered round the defiant banner of the "National Observer," and to most young minds for whom literature mattered exceedingly in those days, Mr. Henley was the Viking chief of letters, whom all delighted to follow, whose praise alone

mattered, whose example set the mark for rejoicing emulation. It was often hard in those days (however clear the distinction may have become since) to tell the work of the gifted follower from that of the magnetic master; and probably it was the nearest thing which English letters has seen to the zealotry of the French Romantics for the magisterial ascendance of Victor Hugo.

Whether Mr. Henley were greater in prose or verse it would go hard to say: though one may surely foretell that the perdurable quality of poetry will in the end take revenge for its tardier instant appeal. Yet, because brilliant English and brilliant critical impressionism (appreciation is the commodious word for it) do make some swift appeal to all with any lettered sense, we may consider first the prose of this man with the rare dual gift. Whichever way you take him, the genius is unmistakable. Appreciation (briefly) resides in attempting to dis-

cover what your author has aimed to compass; and then setting forth the impression yourself retain of his success or failure to succeed in the elected aim. It is obvious that your achievement will be very much in the ratio of your sympathetic gift; as that is limited your achievement will be limited, as that is comprehensive your achievement will be comprehensive, as that is subtle or delicate your achievement will be subtle or delicate. Now Mr. Henley's sympathy is a thing very far from comprehensive; yet it were merely unjust to call it narrow. It is wide, and heartily wide, but defective — curiously, unexpectedly, perversely defective. It is comparable to the Scottish coast; an ample coast-line, yet jaggedly broken, abruptly and bafflingly discontinuous — in the racy Shakesperean phrase, *nook-shotten* — which juts forth innumerable bold projections, and is breached as brusquely with countless ragged fissures. The projections are the

keen saliences of Mr. Henley's righteous perception; the fissures the startling rifts and unforeseeable lapses in that perception. When he has carried you off your feet with his inevitable rightness, he is most like to stagger you back to them by his wilful and confident wrongness. For like Ruskin, to whom he is the antithesis in many things, he is always certain, and never more certain than when he is most unsafe.

He is not, therefore, a critic to whom you can placidly yield yourself; but he *is* a critic invariably pungent, vital, arresting; who carries you on by storm and shock, whose misjudgments are more stimulant than other men's correctness. Since the force of his statement is so great you are electrified into protest against his error, and the necessity of protest compels you to think. You cannot remain indifferent before this meteoric reviewer.

And that comes not alone of his mental vigor and individuality, but of his mar-

vellous style. It is a style artificial, after its kind, as that Goliath of the Philistines, Macaulay; yet so pulsating with impulsive energy that want of nature is the last thing you have breath to think of. A world of cultured study has gone to the forging of the weapon; bickering with epigram and antithesis, glittering with the elaborate research of phrase which betokens his poetic discipline, poised shapen in its sentences with the artful and artistic hand of a consummate master; yet the fire, the off-hand virility of the man enable him to wield it with all the ease and nature imaginable. It glances with the swift and restless brilliance of a leaping salmon in sunlight. Mr. Henley's style has almost every quality, in fact, except repose and the powers dependent on repose — dignity, for instance, or simplicity; just as his criticism misses the crowning excellence of sympathetic completion and the balance which comes of calm judgment. But had he these qualities we should not have our

Henley: they are scarce compatible with the arrowy scintillation and reinless *élan* of his writing. In his most characteristic and high wrought passages antithesis, epigram, audacious paradox fly like scud on the racing wave of the sentence. With all this, though Mr. Henley learned many of his arts from France, he is ever male, sinewy, and English in essential quality, bearing his British heritage in the bones of his style.

With such character, and such executive power to manifest it, he is naturally best where he is most one at heart with the man he criticises (for the overwhelming bulk of his scant and treasurable prose-work consists of reviews — pregnant and brief). Out of the various and cosmopolitan critiques in "Views and Reviews" (chiefly French and English however) one would pick as triumphant and magisterial Henley such things as the Labiche, Rabelais, Berlioz, Hugo, Meredith, and Disraeli. Perhaps specially

the last three: they have all the very qualities and defects which might endear them to Mr. Henley. Disraeli, for instance. The unconventional Tory appeals to the unconventional Tory; the master of antithesis, epigram, and paradox to a master of epigram, paradox, and antithesis; the brilliant unrest of the one to the brilliant unrest of the other; the statesman's intolerant scorn of commonplace to the writer's intolerant scorn of commonplace; even the masterful egoism of Disraeli to a certain masterful egoism of Henley. You would expect a victorious "critique," and you have a victorious critique. There are no *lacunae* in judgment; the reviewer is with his subject to the marrow; and you have the very Henley at his best.

Flashing insight, keen unraveling of vices from merits, language rejoicing in its own point, purity, and ebullience of resourceful strength. Elsewhere you stumble over fads, blindnesses, wilful crotchets.

In such essays as we have named, you are left to unhindered enjoyment and wonder.

As a poet, Mr. Henley falls into two chief periods. He gained fame with "A Book of Verses," and mostly with two sections of it; the "Hospital Poems," because nothing like them had been known in English, the "Bric-a-Brac," because very much like them was known in English. The latter fell in with a dominant fashion, the imitation of the artificial forms of old French verse; the former set a fashion. The "Hospital Poems" were in a style drawn from French exemplars; but (as we have said) it was a style unexampled in our own poetry, and had the immediate success of novelty in addition to that justly earned by the power of the verse itself. Novelty is by no means a usual poetic advantage in England, but in this case the novelty was of a kind universally comprehensible; it lay in assimilating poetry to prose — and that blessed day of the Lord when poetry

shall be prose is a consummation for which the great heart of the British public ever yearns. In so far as it colorably resembled prose, Mr. Henley's Hospital experiment was therefore inevitably popular; in so far as it distinctly, and none the less, remained poetry, the public did not know that — did not nose the contraband ware, and allowed it to pass unsuspectingly. With a leaven of sonnets, these poems are in rhymeless lyric metres of various shapes, fashioned with cunning originality, for their peculiar function and peculiar content. Often but slightly more than squared and measured-off prose in their movement, they fit exactly the realism of the style, which admits a larger infusion of every-day and colloquial idioms or diction than poetry had ventured on before. The marrow of poetry is subtly preserved by the exceeding fitness and closeness of phrase, the intimacy of emotion; while the expression rises at need into the higher reaches of poetry.

Only Mr. Henley had the secret of this peculiar combination; which after all, while, (apart from the sonnets) the shape looks so formless, is really dependent on an admirably sure instinct of form. The marvellous sonnet descriptive of Stevenson (which is in the style of the Hospital poems, though it has but an accidental connection with them) is really as much matter of perfect form and phrase as the Bric-a-Brac poems, which are avowed exercises in the most artificial kinds of form. Hence it is not surprising that Mr. Henley's success in these is as perfect as in the rugged realism of the Hospital section. They are handled with a lightness, a deftness, which naturalises this alien and unnatural form as few of its English devotees have succeeded in doing. The ballade "Of a Toyokuni Color-Print" with its refrain, "I loved you once in old Japan"— sketched with sparing, graceful lines which are themselves Japanese in quality:—

Clear shine the hills; the rice-fields round
Two cranes are circling; sleepy and slow,
A blue canal the lake's blue bound
Breaks at the bamboo-bridge; and lo!
Touched with the sundown's spirit and glow,
I see you turn, with flirted fan,
Against the plum-tree's bloomy snow. . . .
I loved you once in old Japan!

That, or the Double Ballade "Of Life and Fate," as sprightly and charming a dance of words as may be penned in its gay trifling, show what a master of verse at play was the stern poet of "In Hospital," with its manner and metres grim, bare, and saturnine in severe structuralness as the Hospital itself.

Scattered through this volume were strains of a higher mood, suggesting a more inward poetry than the rest. But as a whole, this first book showed Mr. Henley as a poet after the Gallic fashion, which (at least till very recently, and regarding the general type of the national genius) is, like that of the Greeks, rather

an artistic than a poetic fashion of song. The French poetic genius has always depended for excellence on formal and structural perfection, has been a chiselled and carven thing. The same reliance on a severely architectural perfection marked the Greek poetry: so that Heine said there was more *poetry* in Shakespeare than in all the Greek poets together, except Aristophanes. English poetry, on the contrary, is the ideal of a poetry completely distinguished from art, depending on an inward and indescribable spirit which perhaps (though the word breeds confusion, yet for lack of a better) we may call the romantic spirit. Mr. Henley's first book belonged to artistic and Gallic poetry, an objective thing, a thing of form and carving. But the "London Voluntaries" showed him as an absolutely English poet. He had attained a far higher poetry, full of the romantic spirit, which animated and formed the form in-

stead of depending on it. Need we say that (as a matter of course) the new book failed of the popularity gained by the earlier? The poems called "London Voluntaries" were the most patent sign and result of this poetic advance: it is on these and the lyrics which companioned them that Mr. Henley's final fame will most surely rest. They are in so-called "irregular" lyric metre, ebbing and flowing with the emotion itself. Irregular it is not, though the law is concealed. Only a most delicate response to the behests of inspiration can make such verse successful. As some persons have an instinctive sense of orientation by which they always know the quarter of the East, so the poet with this gift has a subtle sense of hidden metrical law, and in his most seeming-vagrant metre revolves always (so to speak) round a felt though invisible centre of obedience. Mr. Henley has the sense fully. In these "Voluntaries" a rich and lovely verbal

magic is mated with metre that comes and goes like the heaving of the Muse's bosom —

The ancient river singing as he goes
New-mailed in morning to the ancient Sea.

Or again: —

The night goes out like an ill-parcelled fire,
And, as one lights a candle, it is day.

Such things as these are obvious and clamorous beauties. But the exquisitely textured and remotely magical passages which cannot be shut up in a line or two —these we dare not begin to quote, lest we make no end. We might venture with —

The still, delicious night, not yet aware
In any of her innumerable nests
Of that first sudden plash of dawn,
Clear, sapphirine, luminous, large.

But the passage broadens into beauty, drawing us on, and we have to stop, feeling that we have been guilty of mere

mutilation. Mr. Henley's sense of words, and gift of conveying the inmost feeling of a scene, is in these poems supreme. And what shall one say of "The Song of the Sword," which rings like the cry of the Viking Raven fluttering her wings for battle? What of little lyrics like "You played and sang a snatch of song"? It conveys the very regret of "old, unhappy, far-off things." In this book Mr. Henley, artist to the last, has touched the inner springs of poetry. If his leading trait is a rugged strength and faithfulness to the thing seen or known, such as looks from his bust by Rodin, he has also the capacity for sudden intimacies of beauty or feeling which is the birthright of strength. Not much more gravely and poignantly tender has been written than the rhymeless lyric, "When you wake in your crib," while the minor lyrics cover a very various range of quality. From the direct truth of "In Hospital" to the gates of romance in the later book, you

have measured a compass very unique, and this romance is drawn from the stony ground of London. Perhaps, indeed, it is as the poet of London that he will best be remembered.

POPE

THERE was born in eighteenth century England a pale little diseased wretch of a boy. Since it was evident that he would never be fit for any healthy and vigorous trade, and that he must all his life be sickly and burdensome to himself, and since it is the usual way of such unhappy beings to add to their unhappiness by their own perversities of choice, he naturally became a poet. And after living for long in a certain miserable state called glory, reviled and worshipped and laughed at and courted, despised by the women he loved, very ill looked after, amid the fear and malignity of many and the affection of very few, the wizened little suffering monstrosity died, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, by way of encour-

aging others to follow in his footsteps. And though a large number of others have done so with due and proper misfortune, in all the melancholy line there is, perhaps, no such destined a wretch as Alexander Pope. What fame can do to still the cravings of such a poor prodigal of song, in the beggarly raiment of his tattered body, that it did for him. The husks of renown he had in plenty, and had them all his life, as no other poet has had. But Voltaire testified that the author of that famous piece of philosophy, "Whatever is, is right," was the most miserable man he had ever known.

This king of the eighteenth century is still the king of the eighteenth century by general consent. Dryden was a greater poet, *meo judicio*, but he did not represent the eighteenth century so well as Pope. All that was elegant and airy in the polished artificiality of that age reaches its apotheosis in the "Rape of the Lock." It is Pope's masterpiece, a Watteau in verse.

The poetry of manners could no further go than in this boudoir epic, unmatched in any literature. It is useless, I may here say, to renew the old dispute whether Pope was a poet. Call his verse poetry or what you will, it is work in verse which could not have been done in prose, and, of its kind, never equalled. Then the sylph machinery in "The Rape of the Lock" is undoubted work of fancy: the fairyland of powder and patches, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" seen through chocolate-fumes. The "Essay on Man" is nought to us nowadays, as a whole. It has brilliant artificial passages. It has homely aphorisms such as only Pope and Shakespeare could produce — the quintessence of pointed common sense: many of them have passed into the language, and are put down, by three out of five who quote them, to Shakespeare. But, as a piece of reasoning in verse, the "Essay on Man" is utterly inferior to Dryden's "Hind and Panther." Even that brilliant achieve-

ment could not escape the doom which hangs over the didactic poem pure and simple; and certain, therefore, was the fate of the "Essay on Man."

The "Dunciad" De Quincey ranked even above the "Rape of the Lock." At my peril I venture to question a judgment backed by all the ages. The superb satire of parts of the poem I admit; I admit the exceedingly fine close, in which Pope touched a height he never touched before or after; I admit the completeness of the scheme. But from that completeness comes the essential defect of the poem. He adapted the scheme from Dryden's "MacFlecknoe." But Dryden's satire is at once complete and succinct: Pope has built upon the scheme an edifice greater than it will bear; has extended a witty and ingenious idea to a portentous extent at which it ceases to be amusing. The mock solemnity of Dryden's idea becomes a very real and dull solemnity when it is extended to literal epic proportions. A

serious epic is apt to nod, with the force of a Milton behind it; an epic satire fairly goes to sleep. A pleasantry in several books is past a pleasantry. And it is bolstered out with a great deal which is sheer greasy scurrility. The mock-heroic games of the poets are in large part as dully dirty as the waters into which Pope makes them plunge. If the poem had been half as long, it might have been a masterpiece. As it is, unless we are to reckon masterpieces by avoirdupois weight, or to assign undue value to mere symmetry of scheme, I think we must look for Pope's satirical masterpiece elsewhere. Not in the satire upon women, where Pope seems hardly to have his heart in his work; but in the imitations from Horace, those generally known as Pope's "Satires." Here he is at his very best and tersest. They are as brilliant as anything in the "Dunciad," and they are brilliant right through; the mordant pen never flags. It matters not that they are imitated from Horace.

They gain by it: their limits are circumscribed, their lines laid down, and Pope writes the better for having these limits set him, this tissue on which to work. Not a whit does he lose in essential originality; nowhere is he so much himself. It is very different from Horace, say the critics. Surely that is exactly the thing for which to thank poetry and praise Pope. It has not the pleasant urbane good humor of the Horatian spirit. No, it has the spirit of Pope — and satire is the gainer. Horace is the more charming companion; Pope is the greater satirist. In place of an echo of Horace (and no verse translation was ever anything but feeble which attempted merely to echo the original), we have a new spirit in satire; a fine series of English satirical poems, which in their kind are unapproached by the Roman, and in his kind wisely avoid the attempt to approach him. "Satires after Horace" would have been a better title than "Imitations"; for less imitative poems in es-

sence were never written. These and the "Rape of the Lock" are Pope's finest title to fame. The "Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady," has at least one part which shows a pathos, little to have been surmised from his later work; and so, perhaps (in a much less degree, I think), have fragments of the once famous "Eloisa to Abelard." But the "Pastorals," and the "Windsor Forest," and the "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day," and other things in which Pope tried the serious or natural vein, are only fit to be remembered with Macpherson's Ossian and the classical enormities of the French painter David.

On the whole, it is as a satirist we must think of him, and the second greatest in the language. The gods are in pairs, male and female; and if Dryden was the Mars of English satire, Pope was the Venus — a very eighteenth century Venus, quite as conspicuous for malice as for elegance. If a woman's satire were informed with genius, and cultivated to the utmost

perfection of form by lifelong and exclusive literary practice, one imagines it would be much like Pope's. His style seems to me feminine in what it lacks; the absence of any geniality, any softening humor to abate its mortal thrust. It is feminine in what it has, the malice, the cruel dexterity, the delicate needle point which hardly betrays its light and swift entry, yet stings like a bee. Even in his coarseness — as in the "Dunciad" — Pope appears to me female. It is the coarseness of the fine ladies of that material time, the Lady Maries and the rest of them. Dryden is a rough and thick-natured man, cudgelling his adversaries with coarse speech in the heat of brawl and the bluntness of his sensibilities; a country squire, who is apt at times to use the heavy end of his cutting whip; but when Pope is coarse he is coarse with effort, he goes out of his way to be nasty, in the evident endeavor to imitate a man.

It is a girl airing the slang of her schoolboy brother. The one thing, perhaps, which differentiates him from a woman, and makes it possible to read his verse with a certain pleasure, without that sense of unrelieved cruelty which repels one in much female satire, is his artist's delight in the exercise of his power. You feel that, if there be malice, intent to wound, even spite, yet none of these count for so much with him as the exercise of his superb dexterity in fence. He is like Ortheris fondly patting his rifle after that long shot which knocked over the deserter, in Mr. Kipling's story. After all, you reflect, it is fair fight; if his hand was against many men, many men's hands were against him. So you give yourself up to admire the shell-like epigram, the rocketing and dazzling antithesis, the exquisitely deft play of point, by which the little invalid kept in terror his encompassing cloud of enemies — many of them adroit and formidable

wits themselves. And you think, also, that the man who was loved by Swift, the professional hater, was not a man without a heart; though he wrote the most finished and brilliant satire in the language.

THE ERROR OF THE EXTREME REALISTS

WHETHER or not for ultimate good, certainly for much immediate evil, the gospel preached by M. Zolà has become an influence among many novelists. As we understand his gospel in its relation to morals, it is this — that the novelistic art, in order to be a complete art, must pitilessly delineate the evil, no less than the good, in man's nature; that the Pompeii of human life, moulded under the scoriac conventions accumulating from a traditional and consentaneous suppression of facts, must be (in Thackeray's words) "laid bare from the forum to the lupanar." From the temple downward, all the edifices in this mighty ruin of humanity must be described with impartial minuteness. Now

if we admitted the truth of this evangel (which we do *not*), it would still not justify Zola's own practice. For the charge against *him* is not that he describes the lupanar with the same precision as the temple, but that he gives us exceedingly little of the temple and far too much of the lupanar. We may therefore make M. Zola the Jonah of his own vessel, and see if it will float the better for the lightening.

The attention which it would be waste of time to bestow on Zola himself, it may not be so unprofitable to bestow on his theory. For, it would seem that there are a certain number of writers, both here and in America, who are strongly attracted by his theory, yet — according to their lights — are earnest enough in disclaiming any wish to outrage delicacy. They are, as we think, in genuine trouble about their artistic souls. They are filled with indignant scorn for the ordinary English novel of the present day, for what they consider its complacently dishonest blinking

of facts, and turn to the Zolaistic gospel as a relief. Nor can anyone who is really acquainted with the average conditions of modern English life fail to see that these men are not destitute of a certain reason. It is impossible to read many of the rose-colored productions which pass as portraiture of existence, and then lift one's eyes to the grim reality which welters all round us, without feeling that the novels in question are about as much like the existence which they profess to portray as wax is like flesh. It is therefore very much in accordance with human nature if the writers to whom we have referred fly from a convention which, they feel, is both insincere and unduly restrictive of the novelist's art, to a theory which presents the opposite extreme of no limit at all. In their error they are greatly assisted by the blurred outlines of Protestant ethics — outlines so blurred that it is necessary to judge a Protestant writer's intentions by an altogether different stand-

ard from that applicable to a Catholic. We remember the publication, a few years ago, of an English novel which was strongly and deservedly censured by the Catholic (and largely also by the Protestant) press; but with perhaps more questionable justice the censure was unsparingly extended to the writer. He had certainly gone as near the method of some French novelists as an English publisher would be likely to tolerate. Yet it appeared to us not impossible that he had, as he claimed, been actuated by a good intention; that he had started with a genuine ethical purpose, but had foundered in the execution between the Scylla of a moral code lacking definition and the Charybdis of "artistic completeness." We mention this as an example of the difficulty which Protestant writers often appear to find. The limits of the novelist in this matter are nevertheless clear enough, with the aid of a little conscience on the part of the author and a little charity on the part of the critic.

There is no reason whatsoever why the novelist should blink the existence of widespread evil. He may portray it, provided he portray it *as* evil, up to a certain bound. Of course a writer who does this cannot write *virginibus puerisque*. But we think that a novelist has a perfect right to elect such a course; nor is he responsible if, through the laxity of guardians or the unscrupulousness of the young themselves, his book fall into hands for which it was never intended. Of course, also, the rule (as we have virtually admitted) is not absolutely precise. We are not all alike in temperament; and what is innocent to the majority may be offensive to the individual conscience. With this the novelist has nothing to do. His practical duty is to pen nothing which if it came to him from another would arouse his own passions. The individual who may nevertheless find the book a stumbling-block has a ready remedy. He can lay it down. But the author *must* be conscientious in this

self-judgment, and lean rather, if need be, to restriction than laxity. Given conscience and a pure mind, however, the application of the rule should be a clear enough matter to any writer; and within its limit he has a field wide enough for every requirement of true art. In this connexion, the case of the critic asks consideration. How is *he* to know whether, firstly, the effect of a book on *his* mind correctly represents its effect on the minds of most readers; or whether, secondly, its effect on the minds of most readers correctly represents its effect on the mind of the author? The answer is that, in a limited number of nevertheless quite possible cases, he cannot certainly know either one or the other. He must, like the author, act conscientiously on his own impressions. If he entertain any doubt as to the representative nature of those impressions, he may content himself with a warning that the book is not for all readers; and if, though he condemns the book, he hesitate

to condemn its writer, let him, where malice is not clear, incline to the side of charity. If, finally, he honestly pronounce an undeserved censure, little harm will be done. The general sense of criticism will rectify his individual injustice. We say "will," who ought rather to have said "would"; "would," were such charitable rectitude general among critics. Unfortunately, in respect of these matters no less than in respect of literary merit, wanton judgments are frequent, to the deepening of the prevalent ethical confusion. It may be urged that a genuinely evil writer can shelter himself behind the pretence that his work was void of offence to his own conscience. Indubitably: he always can and he always has done. Formerly the subterfuge was seen and scorned of all men. Now, however, the narrow-minded recklessness of censure to which we have referred enables such men's plea to secure credence and sympathy in dangerous measure, through the identification of their cause with that of

true sufferers from unmerited obloquy. It has become miserably possible for them to say, "The critics who condemn me are the same critics who condemned X. and Y.; I am not ashamed to suffer in their company:" X. and Y. being well known of many as honorable and earnest writers sacrificed to that wretched counterfeit of morality, that bastard of British Virtue, which goes by the name of Propriety. We have no reason, however, to recede from our position because, *e. g.*, Mr. Swinburne in earlier days profited by the attack which confounded, in one indiscriminate onslaught, his own worst work with the work — so diametrically opposite in teaching and tendency — of Rossetti. Scripture is none the less true because the devil can quote it for his purpose.

But there may be, nay are, writers who — without wishing to contravene delicacy for the sake of contravention — nevertheless, considering themselves, in their own phrase, "artists before everything," hold

that when morality antagonises art morality must stand aside. Even to them we will leave no excuse. In guiding themselves rigidly by morality they will best advance the ends of art. If there be any apparent conflict between the two, let such writers rest assured that the fault lies, not in morality, but in their own mistaken views of art. Morality never did nor can conflict with art. Take an analogy which may render the matter clearer. If a novelist conduct his hero on a first sea-voyage, it is according to nature that all but very heroic heroes indeed should be sea-sick; and the novelist may therefore, if he choose, comply with nature. But will he, for one moment, dream of describing in its unsavory detail the progress of the *mal de mer?* And why not? Because it would be disgusting; and his artistic sense warns him to avoid what is disgusting. For precisely parallel reasons must he avoid description calculated to inflame the passions. It is necessary for art to eschew the sen-

sual no less than the disgusting. This constitutes no incompleteness in art, but on the contrary a most artistic incompleteness. For art resides, not in undiscerning comprehensiveness, but in discerning selection. Hence, in order to condemn the methods of the ultra-realists there is no need to invoke morality. They stand doubly condemned, condemned by morality and condemned by art. Zolaism is not artistic completeness: it is artistic excess. "Nature," says Sir Thomas Browne, in a memorable passage, "is not at variance with art, nor art with nature; . . . for nature is the art of God." Substitute for "nature" "morality," and the saying still holds true. For morality is God's spiritual, as nature is His visual art; and it is necessary to consult morality in delineating the intellectual no less than nature in delineating the external aspects of being, the one in the portrayal of human conduct, as the other in the portrayal of physical beauty.

BUNYAN IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN CRITICISM

THESE are the days of the Higher Criticism; when criticism, as the author of a book before us,— "Ignorant Essays"— remarks, has been reduced to an exact science — or thinks it has, which is not perhaps the same thing. It is Mr. Dowling's remark, not ours; for we have our doubts as to the scientific exactness of the Higher Criticism, or indeed as to the possibility of reducing literary criticism, and above all, poetical criticism, to an exact science. Much, no doubt, may be and has been done in the direction of codifying it, and introducing guards against the worse excesses of dull caprice: but when all has been said and done, the last word in the fast resort must always remain to be ut-

tered by that indescribable, intuitive faculty which we label rather than describe as Taste; a faculty which, though it may be educed, cultivated, and corrected, can no more be taught than poetry itself; but, like poetry, is born with its possessor. There are subtle currents of perception which the most delicate galvanometer of expression refuses to indicate. You cannot always formulate feeling. There are cases in which, if the critic attempt to fortify his inborn instinct for poetic excellence by reasoned demonstration, he deludes his readers, and most of all himself; in which the only honest method is virtually, if not explicitly, to declare, "This is poetry — I *feel* it to be poetry." Until quite recently, however, the scientific prestige of the Higher Criticism was a thing so overwhelming that the few cavillers who were sensible of these things dared not lift their voices. But since the very prophet of the new method, Mr. Matthew Arnold, showed by his onslaught on Shel-

ley that all the forces of the Higher Criticism were unavailing to protect a critic from aberrations of judgment grievous as any recorded of poor, despised Jeffrey, nay even (except for Gifford's vulgarity) of Gifford himself, it has become possible for a writer, while acknowledging the genuine good work done by the innovation, to question its claims to the rank of a science. Nay, we ask pardon for using such language: to our thinking, criticism, in essence if not in detail, is a higher and more delicate thing than any science.

Accordingly, it is a pleasure to encounter a writer who approaches the great poets (throwing aside pretensions to "accurate criticism") in the attitude of reverent delighted admiration, and warm, sympathetic intuition. In *their* case, at least, such an attitude is surely admissible and appropriate. Their place in literature is long since decided, so far as concerns the present generation; their faults, such as they are, have been detected and

catalogued: it becomes possible in their regard to have a surfeit of balanced critical appraisal. The one thing we cannot have too much of is discriminating praise, rooted (as with the author under notice) in direct poetical insight. And the writer's praise is infectious in its generosity and truth. We all, or let us hope, most of us, know how delightful is the conversation of a friend who reverberates in lustier, more vigorous phrases, our own love for the heirs of immortality, who voices, as it were, the inarticulate throbbings of our hearts. Such a friend is the book before us. The author speaks of the great poets, of Keats, or Spenser, or De Quincey,[1] as we are told that Keats himself spoke, and as we know that Keats wrote of them — with eyes kindling, and

[1] We make no apology for placing De Quincey among the poets. If ever poetry quitted for a space her mighty orchestra of metre to draw hardly less mighty harmonies from the majestic organ of prose, it was when she dominated the great soul in the frail body of Thomas de Quincey.

quickened pulse, so that the cold printed lines seem to rise and ring like a human voice. If, when he has finished some of these "Essays," the reader does not feel an irrepressible desire to shake the author by the hand, and thank him for his stimulating converse — then the reader's feelings are not as ours, and this book is not for him. He had better seek some critic who will lay his subject on the table, nick out every nerve of thought, every vessel of emotion, every muscle of expression with light, cool, fastidious scalpel, and then call on him to admire the "neat dissection."

With that quick, direct insight, which distinguishes him, the author of "Ignorant Essays" has detected a literary fallacy which has long flourished in unchecked rankness. For nearly two centuries Bunyan and the "Pilgrim's Progress" have remained unassailed by the literary iconoclasts, who have left little unassailed that was capable of assault; until Macaulay,

by his celebrated essay, set the seal on the literary reputation of the converted tinker. It is strange (but thanks are none the less surely due to him) that it should have been left for the writer of these "Essays" to utter the first word of cavil. He has accepted the responsibility manfully; and at an appropriate moment, when the centenary of Bunyan is being celebrated by his admirers, and when, moreover, the mediæval book from which Bunyan borrowed is about to reappear in English dress. The following passage occurs in what is the most important, as it is one of the most interesting, of Mr. Dowling's "Essays"—"Lies of Fable and Allegory":—

"How any man with imagination can bear the book I do not know. Bunyan had inexhaustible invention, but no imagination. He saw a reason for things, but not the things themselves. No creation of the imagination can lack consequence or verisimilitude. On almost every page of

the 'Progress' there is violation of sequence, outrage against verisimilitude. Christian has a great burden on his back and is in rags. He cannot remove the burden. (Why?) He is put to bed (with the burden on his back), then he is troubled in his mind (the burden is forgotten, and the vision altered completely and fatally); again we are reminded that he has the burden on his back when he tells Evangelist of it. Why can he not loose the burden on his back? How is it secured so that he cannot remove it? He cannot see a wicket-gate across a very wide field, but he sees a shining light (where?), and then he begins to run (burden and all) away from his wife and children (which is immoral and abhorrent to the laws of God and Man). For the mere selfish ease of his body he deserts his wife and children, who must be left miserably poor, for is he not in rags? The neighbors come out and mock at him for running across a field. Why? How do they

know why he runs, and what neighbors are there to come out and mock at one when one is running across a large field? The Slough of Despond is in this field (for he has not passed through the wicket-gate), and he does not seem to know of the Slough, or think of avoiding it. Fancy any man not knowing of such a filthy hole within a field of his home! How is it that Pliable and Obstinate have no burdens on their backs? It is not the will of the King that this Slough should be dangerous to wayfarers: this surely is blasphemy. The whole thing is grotesquely absurd, and impossible to imagine. There is no sobriety in it, no sobriety of keeping in it; and no matter how wild the effort or vision of imagination may be there must always be sobriety of keeping in it, or it is delirium not imagination, disease not inspiration. As far as I can see, there is no trace of imagination, or even fancy, in the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' The story never

happened at all. It is a horrible attempt to tinkerise the Bible."

Surely, this is true; and it is a blot on English criticism that we should have had to wait so long for a strong, honest voice to utter it. Macaulay praises the vivid impression produced by the scenes. Macaulay was brought up in evangelical circles, and we suspect that early familiarity had much to do with the effect produced by these scenes on his imagination. Vivid they are not. Indeed, Bunyan hardly ever even attempts description; the merest guide-book mention suffices him. Now in the hands of a master of language, such slight mention may, by skilful selection of salient detail, become pictorial: some of Dante's scenes, for example, are of this order, yet who desires one syllable further in Dante's slightest sketch? But Bunyan's jejune mention has no such redeeming magic; it is a mere evasion of difficulties beyond his grasp. Take the

Slough of Despond. What is there to account for its celebrity? He mentions that there was a slough in the field, and that it was miry — no more; we learn that Christian was grievously bemuddied, and we are sorry that there was no one on the other side to brush the poor man's clothes. But he was never, it would appear, in the least danger; the thing is not exciting, nor interesting, nor graphic, nor anything but dull. For all that distinguishes this slough from any other slough, it might be the quagmire on the common into which Farmer Giles's cow strayed the other day. We have searched the book in vain for a single scene with a single master-touch of delineation; and the result has been thoroughly to convince us that the man was incapable of such a thing, he *knew* himself incapable, and therefore instinctively shirked description.

Take again one of the passages specially alluded to by Macaulay — a passage with great possibilities for a powerful

writer — that describing the Valley of the Shadow. For once Bunyan does flicker into a meagre glimmer of description; but its only effect is to leave the darkness of his fancy visible, and he flickers feebly out again. The mouth of Hell is by the way; and after his usual commonplace manner of vision, he introduces this tremendous idea with a dense flippancy such as never surely was accorded to it before: so introduced, the mouth of Hell affects the imagination no more than if it had been the mouth of a blast-furnace. We beg pardon of the blast-furnace. Seen by night, shooting up its red and lonely fires amidst a bleak waste of country desolately drear as the heath of Forres, a blast-furnace is an eerie, uncomfortable spectacle, making you draw back into your carriage (if you are on the railway) with a little shiver, and a sensation as if darkness had grown suddenly several degrees more gloomy. But there is no shiver in Bunyan's Hell. And he is as incapable of

beauty as of terror. The Delectable Mountains have nothing delectable but their name. He speaks of an Enchanted Arbor; and for a moment lovely possibilities of poetry make shifting gleams before the beguiled expectation. Alas! the Enchanted Arbor has a green roof, but there its poetry begins and ends. It is nothing but a rustic alehouse bench, upholstered with cushions by a daring flight of Bunyanesque fancy: very comfortable to sleep on, as the allegorist assures us. Why, yes; and it is an enchanted arbor such as might have dawned in some seraphic dream upon the great mind of Christopher Sly.

Finally, and because here it becomes possible to compare Bunyan with a genuine master of personification, consider the castle of Giant Despair. Despair himself is a gross, dull, blundering creation, very much like a ruffianly inn-keeper with irresponsible powers; and so irreclaimably stupid, so destitute of all awful qualities,

that he must needs go to bed and consult his wife before he can devise torments for his helpless victims. Why Despair should have a wife, and who or what Despair's wife may be, though questions difficult of solution as "what song the sirens sang, or what name Achilles took when he hid himself among women,"[2] are insignificant absurdities beside the poverty of the whole conception. The dungeon is as commonplace as the Giant; the tortures — cudgelling and hunger — are commonplace tortures; and then Despair comes down and counsels his prisoners to make away with themselves. Here was an opportunity, had Bunyan possessed one tithe of the faculty required to avail himself of the opportunity! But he shirks it, as usual, and after barely mentioning the fact, sends his personification of the most awful passion in the stormy gamut of human passions upstairs again — to his wife, we

[2] Sir Thomas Browne's types of knotty difficulty, instanced by him in the "Urn-Burial."

presume, and bed, as if Despair could sleep! Not a syllable of the arguments by which he lured his caged wretches to self-destruction, though at other times he is full of prosy discussion! Consequently the reader is surprised to find Christian subsequently dallying with thoughts of suicide. We seem to hear and see quite another Despair, whose dwelling was a mere barren cave, not a castle; but who needed no hunger, stripes, nor torments, nothing but the gloomy necromancy of his own baleful eloquence to fascinate his over-daring visitants with a fascination which extends to the reader. Compare the two, and you have at once the measure of the difference between John Bunyan and Edmund Spenser.

What is true of the scenes is true also of the characters. Macaulay instances Madam Bubble, "swarthy Madam Bubble." Well, Bunyan tells us that she was swarthy, and that she was comely, and that she smiled in the ending of her speech. If

this is graphic, then Bunyan is graphic; but you will look in vain for anything more or higher. For all we can see, apart from their surroundings, the Giant Despair might have been the Giant Slaygood, and Giant Slaygood Giant Despair. Nor will the language make amends for the triviality of conception. It is Biblical language reduced to commonplace. Almost on the opening page occurs a phrase (we forget the exact words, and cannot infect ourselves with Bunyan in order to look for it) equivalent to "a phrensy lunacy," and altogether worthy of Mistress Quickly. Bunyan as a writer may be summed up in the words which Louis Blanc unjustly applied to Louis Napoleon: *Bête, bête; il n'est pas permis d'être si bête.* We are not grateful to the essayist for having induced us to renew our acquaintance with the "Pilgrim's Progress."

THE PROSE OF POETS

I

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

AMONG prose-writers a peculiar interest attaches to the poets who have written prose, who can both soar and walk. For to this case the image will not apply: of the eagle overbalanced in walking by the weight of his great wings. Nay, far from the poets being astray in prose-writing, it might plausibly be contended that English prose, as an art, is but a secondary stream of the Pierian fount, and owes its very origin to the poets. The first writer one remembers with whom prose became an art was Sir Philip Sidney. And Sidney was a poet.

If Chaucer, as has been said, is Spring, it is a modern, premature Spring, followed

by an interval of doubtful weather. Sidney is the very Spring — the later May. And in prose he is the authentic, only Spring. It is a prose full of young joy, and young power, and young inexperience, and young melancholy, which is the wilfulness of joy; full of young fertility, wantoning in its own excess. Every nerve of it is steeped in deliciousness, which one might confuse with the softness of a decadent and effeminate age like our own, so much do the extremes of the literary cycle meet. But there is all the difference between the pliancy of young growth and the languor of decay. This martial and fiery progeny of a martial and fiery age is merely relaxing himself to the full in the interval of his strenuous life's campaign, indulging the blissful dreams of budding manhood — a virile Keats, one might say. You feel these martial spirits revelling in the whole fibre of his style. It is, indeed, the writing of a child; or, perhaps, of an exceptional boy, who still retains the roam-

ing, luxuriant sweetness of a child's fancy; who has broken into the store-closet of literary conserves, and cloyed himself in delicious contempt of law and ignorance of satiety, tasting all capricious dainties as they come. The *Arcadia* runs honey; with a leisurely deliberation of relish, epicureanly savoured to the full, all alien to our hurried and tormented age.

Sidney's prose is treasurable, not only for its absolute merits, but as the bud from which English prose, that gorgeous and varied flower, has unfolded. It is in every way the reverse of modern prose. Our conditions of hurry carry to excess the *style coupée*, the abrupt style, resolved into its ultimate elements of short and single sentences. Sidney revels in the periodic style — long sentences, holding in suspension many clauses, which are shepherded to a full and sonorous close. But with him this style is inchoate: it is not yet logically compacted, the clauses do not follow inevitably, are not gradually evolved and ex-

panded like the blossom from the seed. The sentences are loose, often inartificial and tyro-like, tacked together by a profuse employment of relatives and present participles. At times the grammar becomes confused, and falls to pieces.

"Even as a child is often brought to take most wholesome things," etc.; "which if one should begin to tell them the nature of the aloes or rhubarbum they should receive, would"— and so forth. Either Sidney should have written "children" instead of "a child," or "if one should tell it," and so throughout the remainder of the sentence. This is a mild specimen of the reckless grammar into which he often lapses. The piling up of relatives and present participles we need not exemplify: it will be sufficiently seen in the quotations we make to exhibit his general style. But this looseness has a characteristic effect: it conduces to the general quality of Sidney's style. Here, truly, the style is the man. The long, fluctuant sen-

tences, impetuously agglomerated rather than organic growths, have a copious and dissolving melody, quite harmonious with the subject-matter and the nature of the man. Jeremy Taylor, too, mounds his magnificent sentences rather than constructs them: but the effect is different and more masculine; nay, they are structural compared with Sidney's — so far had prose travelled during the interim.

The *Arcadia* is tedious to us in its unvarying chivalrous fantasy and unremittent lusciousness long drawn-out. Yet it has at moments a certain primitive tenderness, natural and captivating in no slight degree. No modern romancer could show us a passage like this, so palpitating in its poured-out feminine compassion. The hero has attempted suicide by his mistress's couch:

"Therefore, getting with speed her weak, though well-accorded limbs out of her sweetened bed, as when jewels are hastily pulled out of some rich coffer, she

spared not the nakedness of her tender feet, but, I think, borne as fast with desire as fear carried *Daphne*, she came running to *Pyrocles*, and finding his spirits something troubled with the fall, she put by the bar that lay close to him, and straining him in her well-beloved embracements; 'My comfort, my joy, my life,' said she, 'what haste have you to kill your *Philoclea* with the most cruel torment that ever lady suffered?'"

What a delicate chivalry of heart there is in it all! How exquisitely felt that phrase, "her sweetened bed"! How charmingly fancied the image which follows it; and how beautiful —"she spared not the nakedness of her tender feet"! How womanly Philoclea's outburst, and the tender eagerness of the whole picture! In other passages Sidney shows his power over that pastoral depiction dear to the Elizabethans — artificial, if you will, refined and courtly, yet simple as the lisp of babes.

"Thyrsis not with many painted words nor falsified promises had won the consent of his beloved Kala, but with a true and simple making her know he loved her, not forcing himself beyond his reach to buy her affection, but giving her such pretty presents as neither could weary him with the giving nor shame her for the taking. Thus, the first strawberries he could find were ever, in a clean-washed dish, sent to Kala; the posies of the spring-flowers were wrapt up in a little green silk, and dedicated to Kala's breasts; thus sometimes his sweetest cream, sometimes the best cake-bread his mother made, were reserved for Kala's taste."

Naturally, his youthful efflorescence spreads itself in description when the chance comes his way: for the Elizabethans had not our monomania for description *per se:*

"There were hills which garnished their proud heights with trees; humble valleys, whose bare estate seemed comforted with

the refreshing of silver rivers; meadows, enamelled with all sorts of eye-pleasing flowers; thickets, which, being lined with most pleasant shade, were witnessed so, too, by a cheerful disposition of many well-tuned birds; each pasture stored with sheep, feeding with sober security; while the lambs, with bleating oratory, craved the dam's comfort. Here a shepherd's boy piping, as though he should never be old; there a young shepherdess knitting, and withal singing; and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to work and her hands kept time to her voice-music."

Sidney is not without that artificial balance and antithesis which, in its most excessive form, we know as euphuism. This, and the other features of his style, appear where we should least expect them; for his style has not the flexibility which can adjust itself to varying themes. How shall an age accustomed to the direct battle-music of Kipling and Stevenson admit

such tortuous narratives of conflict as this?

"Both being thus already allied by blood, yet did strive for a more strict affinity: wounds, in regard of their frequency, being no more respected than blows were before. Though they met in divers colors, now both were clad in one livery, as most suitable to their present estate: being servants to one master, and rivals in preferment. Neither could showers of blood quench the winds of their wrath, which did blow it forth in great abundance, till faintness would have fain persuaded both that they were mortal, and though neither of them by another, yet both overcomable by death. Then despair came to reinforce the fight, joining with courage, not as a companion but as a servant: for courage never grew desperate, but despair grew courageous; both being resolved, if not conquering, none of them should survive the other's conquest, nor owe trophy but to death."

Assuredly Sidney might have learned much from the forthright old Northern sagas, if he had known them, in the art of warlike narrative. But his best prose is, after all, to be found, not in the romantic *Arcadia*, but in the *Defence of Poesy*. There he has had a set purpose of conviction, of attack and defence before him, and is not constantly concerned with artistic writing. The result is more truly artistic for having less explicit design of art. We get not only melodiously-woven sentences, but also touches of true fire and vigor: he is even homely on occasion. It is from the *Defence of Poesy* that critics mostly choose their "Sidneian showers of sweet discourse."

Here is one well-known passage:

"Now, therein, of all sciences (I speak still of human, and according to the human conceit) is our poet the monarch. For he doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect unto the way as will entice any man to enter into it.

Nay, he doth, as if your journey should lie through a fair vineyard, at the very first give you a cluster of grapes, that, full of the taste, you may long to pass further. He beginneth not with obscure definitions, which must blur the margin with interpretations and load the mind with doubtfulness; but he cometh to you with words set in delightful proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for, the well-enchanting skill of music; and with a tale, forsooth, he cometh unto you — with a tale which holdeth children from play and old men from the chimney corner; and, pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue, even as a child is often brought to take most wholesome things by hiding them in such other as have a pleasant taste, which, if one should begin to tell them the nature of the aloes or rhubarbum they should receive, would sooner take their physic at their ears than their mouth. So is it in men — most of whom are childish

in the best things till they be cradled in their graves. Glad they will be to hear the tales of Achilles, Hercules, Cyrus, Aeneas; and hearing them, must needs hear the right description of wisdom, valor, and justice; which, if they had been barely — that is to say, philosophically — set out, they would swear they be brought to school again."

Very plainly, Sidney was no believer in that modern fanaticism — art for art's sake. But from his own standpoint, which is the eternal standpoint, no finer apology for poetry has ever been penned. The reader will note passages which have become almost proverbial. One ought to be proverbial: "Most of whom are childish in the best things, till they be cradled in their graves." The construction has not the perfection of subsequent prose — of Raleigh at his best, or Browne. The sentences do not always stop at their climax, but are weakened by a tagged-on continuation. A modern writer would have made a

period after "wickedness to virtue," and greatly strengthened the effect. But, for all the partial inexpertness, it is splendid writing, with already the suggestion of the arresting phrase and stately cadences presently to be in English prose. He is specially felicitous in those sayings of direct and homely phrase which have become household words: "A tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney-corner," or that other well-known saying that Chevy-Chase moved him "like the sound of a trumpet." It was a great and original genius, perhaps in prose (where he had no models) even more than in poetry, which was cut short on the field of Zutphen; even as the Spanish Garcilaso, also young, noble, and a pastoral poet, fell in the breach of a northern town.

II

SHAKSPEARE

IT might almost be erected into a rule that a great poet is, if he pleases, also a master of prose. Has any great poet essayed prose unsuccessfully? Pope, perhaps, in his letters. But the reason is obvious. The most artificial (in no bad sense) of poets, the sword, the wig, and 'broidered coat, showing with dexterous elegance throughout his verse, he was ill-advised enough to make his bow before posterity in the one form of prose which imperiously demands nature. Horry Walpole was artificial, and Byron was no child of nature, though simplicity compared with Walpole. But the artifice (after its differing kind and proportion) was in the marrow of both men. The letters would not have been themselves without it. Pope, on the contrary, deliber-

ately "wrote up" and falsified his letters to make them "worthy of posterity"— which resented the cheat by refusing to look at them. And he never wrote, to begin with, without an eye on the best models and what his correspondents would think of him. In a more artificial mode of prose he might have been brilliant. Shelley, too, was a more than doubtful success in prose — for a quite opposite reason. Frankly natural, his nature was at its worst in prose. Even in verse he sinned by copiousness. Freed from the restraining banks of rhyme and measure, he "slopped over" with ultra-feminine fluency of language and sentiment; a fatal redundancy mars all his prose. But even Keats, with all his femininity of luxurious emotion, "scores" in his letters. There are few poets, perhaps, from whom we should not wish to have prose. Tennyson in modern times is the great example of a poet who never spoke without his singing-robes. But we feel an instinctive convic-

tion that Tennyson's prose would have been worth having; that it would have been terse, strong, and picturesque — in another fashion from the pictorial English of the Anglo-Saxon revivalists. Indeed, there is manifest reason why a poet should have command over "that other harmony of prose," as a great master of both has called it. The higher includes the lower, the more the less. He who has subdued to his hand all the resources of language under the exaltedly difficult and specialized conditions of metre should be easy lord of them in the unhindered forms of prose. Perhaps it is lack of inclination rather than of ability which indisposes a poet for the effort. Perhaps, also, the metrical restraints are to him veritable aids and pinions, the lack of which is severely felt in prose. Perhaps he suffers, like Claudio, "from too much liberty."

As regards the stern aloofness from prose, if one had to seek a parallel with Tennyson in the past probably most peo-

ple would say his greatest exemplar was Shakespeare. In a sense it is true; and what would one not give that it were otherwise! "The Letters of William Shakespeare"— what might not the man deserve of us who should discover those? Ten thousand Bacons with ten thousand ciphers would give us never a thrill like to that! We would not ask for "Shakespeare's Love-Letters." But Shakespeare's correspondence with *his* private friends — a letter from the pleasant Will to truculent old Ben appointing a meeting at the Mermaid! What are the treasures of our archives, the epistles of kings, and the musty solemnities of ambassadors, to these treasures which no archives have preserved? Why has the relaxing hand of Time yielded to us letters of Elizabethan maids-of-honor and gossiping hangers-on of courts, but never retained one letter of the age's true king? Time is a courtier, and looks on things with the perspective of solemn-nodding Burleigh.

Yet though Shakespeare bequeathed us neither letters nor essays, not so much as a pamphlet, he has not left us without means of estimating what his touch would have been in prose. There is, of course, the plentiful prose-dialogue scattered through his plays. But this can only indirectly give us any notion of what might have been his power as a prose-writer. Dramatic and impersonal, it is directed to reproducing the conversational style of his period, as developed among the picturesque and varying classes of Elizabethan men and women. It is one thing with Rosalind, another with Orlando, another with Beatrice, another with Mistress Ford or Master Page, and yet another with his fools or clowns. Thersites differs from Apemantus, plain-spoken old Lafeu from plain-spoken Kent. At the most we might conjecture hence how Shakespeare talked. And if there be anywhere a suggestion of Shakespeare's talk, we would look for it not so much in the overpowering richness

of Falstaff, as in the light, urbane, good-humored pleasantry of Prince Hal. Prince Hal is evidently a model of the cultivated, quick-witted, intelligent gentleman unbending himself in boon society. In his light dexterity, his high-spirited facility, one seems to discern a reminder of the nimble-witted Shakespeare, as Fuller portrays him in the encounters at the Mermaid. No less do the vein of intermittent seriousness running through his talk, the touches of slightly scornful melancholy, conform to one's idea of what Shakespeare may have been in society. One can imagine him, in some fit of disgust with his companions such as prompted the sonnets complaining of his trade, uttering the contemptuous retort of Prince Hal to Poins: "It would be every man's thought, and thou art a blessed fellow to think as every man thinks; never a man's thought in the world keeps the roadway better than thine."

But this is to consider too curiously.

Let us rather take the passages which have a more conversational structure. The most famous is the speech of Brutus to the Romans:

"If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of Cæsar, to him I say that Brutus' love to Cæsar was no less than his. If, then, that friend demand why Brutus rose against Cæsar, this is my answer, not that I loved Cæsar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Cæsar were living, and die all slaves; than that Cæsar were dead, to live all free men? As Cæsar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honor him; but, as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears, for his love; joy, for his fortune; honor, for his valor; and death, for his ambition. Who is here so base that would be a bondsman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his

country? If any, speak; for him have I offended. I pause for a reply."

This noble speech would alone prove that Shakespeare had a master's touch in prose. The balance, the antithesis, the terseness, the grave simplicity of diction, make it a model in its kind. Yet one can hardly say that this is the fashion in which Shakespeare would have written prose, had he used that vehicle apart from the drama. It was written in this manner for a special purpose — to imitate the laconic style which Plutarch records that Brutus affected. Its laconisms, therefore, exhibit no tendency of the poet's own. To find a passage which we do believe to show his native style we must again go to Prince Hal, in his after-character of Henry V. The whole of the King's encounter with the soldiers, who lay on his shoulders the private consequences of war, affords admirable specimens of prose. But in particular we quote as much as space will allow of his chief defensive utterance:

"There is no king, be his cause never so spotless, if it come to the arbitrament of swords, can try it out with all unspotted soldiers. Some, peradventure, have on them the guilt of premeditated and contrived murder; some, of beguiling virgins with the broken seals of perjury; some, making the wars their bulwark, that have before gored the gentle bosom of peace with pillage and robbery. Now, if these men have defeated the law, and outrun native punishment, though they can outstrip men, they have no wings to fly from God: war is His beadle, war is His vengeance; so that here men are punished, for before breach of the King's laws, in now the King's quarrel: where they feared the death, they have borne life away; and where they would be safe, they perish. Then if they die unprovided, no more is the King guilty of their damnation, than he was before guilty of those impieties for the which they are now visited. Every subject's duty is the King's, but every

subject's soul is his own. Therefore should every soldier in the wars do as every sick man in his bed, wash every mote out of his conscience; and dying so, death is to him advantage: or not dying, the time was blessedly lost, wherein such preparation was gained: and in him that escapes, it were not sin to think, that making God so free an offer, He let him outlive that day to see His greatness, and to teach others how they should prepare."

The whole is on a like level, and it is obvious that Shakespeare's interest in his theme has caused him for the moment to forsake dramatic propriety by adopting a structure much more complete and formal than a man would use in unpremeditated talk. It is Shakespeare defending a thesis with the pen, rather than Henry with the tongue. And you have, in consequence, a fine passage of prose, quite original in movement and style, unlike other prose of the period, and characteristic (we venture to think) of Shakespeare him-

self. You would know that style again. Close-knit, pregnant, with a dexterous use of balance and antithesis, it is yet excellently direct, fluent, and various, the rhetorical arts carefully restrained, and all insistence on them avoided. Despite its closeness, it is not too close; there is space for free motion: and it has a masculine ring, a cut-and-thrust fashion, which removes it far alike from pedantry on the one hand and poetised prose on the other. Such, or something after this manner, would (we think) have been Shakespeare's native style in prose: not the ultra-formal style he put (for a reason) into the mouth of Brutus. We have chosen it, in preference to other passages which might have been cited bearing a similar stamp, because it is the longest and most fully-developed passage in which dramatic necessity suffered the poet to indulge (except that speech of Brutus which, we have shown, cannot be taken as typically Shakespearean).

With the Baconian dispute recently revived, it is interesting to ask how such passages compare with the known prose of Bacon. The speech of Brutus might possibly be Bacon's, who loved the sententious. But surely not a typical passage such as we have quoted. Take an average extract from Bacon's *Essays:*

"It is worth observing that there is no passion in the mind of man so weak, but it mates and masters the fear of death; and therefore, death is no such terrible enemy when a man hath so many attendants about him that can win the combat of him. Revenge triumphs over death; Love delights in it; Honor aspireth to it; Grief flieth to it; nay, we read, after Otho, the emperor, had slain himself, Pity (which is the tenderest of affections) provoked many to die, out of mere compassion to their Sovereign, and as the truest sort of followers."

Grave, cold, slow, affecting an aphoristic brevity, and erring (when it does err)

on the side of pedantry, could this style take on the virile energy and freedom of movement, the equipoise of concision and fluency, which we discern in Henry's speech, as in all Shakespeare's characteristic passages? We cannot think it. And that other style of Bacon's, exemplified in the *Reign of Henry VII.*, expanded, formal, in the slow-moving and rather cumbersome periods which he deems appropriate to historic dignity, is yet more distant from Shakespeare. The more one studies Shakespeare, the more clearly one perceives in him a latent but quite individual prose-style, which, had he worked it out, would have been a treasurable addition to the great lineage of English prose.

III

BEN JONSON

ASKED haphazard to name the poets who were also prose-writers (why have we not developed a single term for the thing, like the French *prosateur?*), few, probably, would think of including Ben Jonson. There is some reason for not thinking of Ben as a prose-writer: he never produced any set and continuous work in prose — not so much as a pamphlet. All he has left us is a collection called *Sylva* or *Timber*, corresponding to the *memorabilia* of what we now call a commonplace-book (apparently because it contains the observations which a man thinks are *not* commonplace). Yet with relation to the development of English prose, *Sylva* by no means deserves the neglect which its disconnected character has brought on it; nor yet in its relation to the great dramatist's own character.

We English have small relish for apophthegms and prose-brevities in general: not among us would a La Rochefoucauld, a Pascal of the *Pensées*, a La Bruyère have found applause. Selden, or Coleridge's *Table-Talk*, the exceedingly witty Characters of *Hudibras* Butler, and other admirable literature of the kind, go virtually unread. We want expansion and explanation; we like not being asked to complement the author's wit by our own. So that *Sylva* had small chance, were it better than it is.

We know two Ben Jonsons, it may be said — the Ben of the plays, rugged, strong, pedantic, unsympathetic, often heavy, coarse and repellant even in his humor, where he is strongest; and the Ben of those surprisingly contrasting lyrics, all too few; small, delicate, and exquisite. It is as though Vulcan took to working in filigree. Here, in *Sylva*, is another Ben, who increases our estimation of the man. We have often thought there was

a measure of affinity between the two Johnsons — Ben and Sam. Their surnames are the same, save in spelling; both have a Scriptural Christian name; both were large and burly men, of strong, unbeautiful countenance —" a mountain belly and a rocky face " the dramatist ascribed to himself. Both were convivial spirits, with a magnetic tendency to form a personal following; " the tribe of Ben " was paralleled by the tribe of Samuel. Both were men distinguished for learning unusual among the literary men of their time. Both carried it over the verge of pedantry, and at the same time had strong sense. Both were notably combative. Both were mighty talkers, and founded famous literary clubs which made the " Mermaid " and the " Mitre " illustrious among taverns. Both, it seems pretty sure, were overbearing. You can imagine Benjamin as ready to browbeat a man as Samuel. There the parallel ends; Ben was not distinguished for religiosity or benev-

olence, Ben was never cited as a moralist. But in *Sylva*, it seems to us, we pick it up again.

There is the strong common-sense, and the uncommon sense, which we find in the Doctor's talk; there is the directness, the straightness to the point. There is, moreover, a robust manliness, an eye which discerns, and a hand which strikes for the pith of any matter, a contained vigor which wastes no stroke. In all these points we find an analogy with the later man; and though they might have been surmised from Ben Jonson's poetry, they appear in a light more favorable, from the absence of violence or coarseness, the compression to which the writer has subjected himself. Even the style is not without analogies to the spoken style of the great conversationalist — so different from his written style. It has nothing of the occasional stateliness, the Latinities, which appeared even in the Doctor's talk. But on the Doctor's vernacular side it

has its kinships. It is clean, hardy, well-knit, excellently idiomatic; pithy and well-poised as an English cudgel. Its marked tendency to the use of balance is a further Johnsonian affinity. We would not, however, be understood to say that it is like the style of Johnson's talk. It is individual, and has the ring common to the Elizabethan style. But it has certain qualities which seem to us akin to the spirit of Johnson's talk. One striking feature is its modernity. It is more modern than Shakespeare's prose. There are many sentences which, with the alteration of a word or so, the substitution of a modern for an archaic inflection, would pass for very good and pure modern prose. It is singular that prose so vernacular should have had no successor, and that so wide an interval should have elapsed between him and Dryden.

Yet, if Jonson influenced no follower, it certainly deserves more notice than it has received that, thus early, prose so

native, showing so much the mettle of its English pasture, could be written. The average style is seen at once in such a passage as this:

"No man is so foolish, but may give another good counsel sometimes; and no man is so wise, but may easily err, if he will take no other counsel but his own. But very few men are wise by their own counsel, or learned by their own teaching. For he that was only taught by himself, hath a fool for a master."

Save for the antiquated inflection of "hath," that is modern enough. Johnson could put a thing with almost — or quite — brutal terseness; but Ben is still more uncompromisingly effective, as in the last sentence of the following quotation:

"Many men believe not themselves what they would persuade others, and less do the things which they would impose on others. . . . Only they set the sign of the Cross over their outer doors,

and sacrifice to their guts and their groin in their inner closets."

It has not the sweetness and light of modern culture; it is ursine: but it sticks in the memory. It is interesting, in reading *Sylva*, to note that Jonson had already formed an opinion on the contest between the Ancients and Moderns, long before it became a burning question in the latter seventeenth, and brought forth Swift's *Battle of the Books* in the eighteenth century. His opinion shows the clear and balanced good sense characteristic of his judgment throughout the book. If any man might have been looked for to be a bigoted champion of the Ancients, it was Jonson, who marred his own work and would have gone hard to mar that of others by his pedantic insistence on classical authority, and lamented Shakespeare's "little Latin and less Greek." Yet he maintains a clear-sighted attitude of respectful independence. The passage is

worth quoting in itself; and not less for the manly and finely-expressed vindication of an author's rights to which it leads:

"I know nothing can conduce more to letters than to examine the writings of the Ancients, and not to rest in their sole authority, or take all upon trust from them: provided the plague of judging and pronouncing against them be away, such as are envy, bitterness, precipitation, impudence and scurrile scoffing. For to all the observations of the Ancients, we have our own experience; which if we will use and apply, we have better means to pronounce. It is true they opened the gates, and made the way that went before us; but as guides, not commanders.

"If in some things I dissent from others, whose wit, industry, diligence, and judgment I look up to and admire; let me not therefore hear presently of ingratitude and rashness. For I thank those that have taught me, and will ever; but yet dare not think the scope of their labor and inquiry

was to envy their posterity what they also could add and find out.

"If I err, pardon me; *nulla ars simul et inventa est, et absoluta.* I do not desire to be equal to those that went before; but to have my reasons examined with theirs, and so much faith to be given them, or me, as those shall evict. I am neither author nor fautor of any sect. I will have no man addict himself to me; but if I have anything right, defend it as Truth's, not mine, save as it conduceth to a common good. It profits me not to have any man fence or fight for me, to flourish, or take my side. Stand for Truth, and 'tis enough."

The last paragraph, in particular, is a noble utterance nobly written. Save for the word "evict" where we should say "evince," it is of notable modernity in diction and style; nor will any lover of prose refuse admiration to its compact and firm-poised structure, its clear, bold, and just expression. It is (so to speak)

all bone and muscle, as a passage of warm yet reasoned defence ought to be. One cannot but smile a little, none the less, at Ben's disclaimer of sects, his "I will have no man addict himself to me": Ben, the focus of disciples and leader in many a literary *fracas*. Yet, despite his upholding of the just rights of the present against the past, he was not satisfied with the present. It is a strange fact that the complaints of decadence in letters, which we hear now, come to us like an echo from the pages of the *Sylva*. In one passage he observes:

"I cannot but think Nature is so spent and decayed, that she can bring forth nothing worth her former years. She is always the same, like herself, and when she collects her strength, is abler still. Men are decayed, and studies; she is not."

Who could conceive that this last pessimist sentence was written by the friend of Shakespeare, the sharer in the glorious prime of English literature, and one of the

great literary periods of the world? Even in his day he evidently felt the paucity of true appreciation:

"There is a more secret cause [he says], and the power of liberal studies lies more hid, than that it can be wrought out by profane wits. It is not every man's way to hit. . . . It is as great a spite to be praised in the wrong place, and by a wrong person, as can be done to a noble nature."

Apparently in Jonson's day the lampoon and the scurrilous verse took the place of the society tattle which we now complain of as a bane of the Press; and he speaks bitterly of these things. Nay, if we are to believe him, the contempt which nowadays clings to the name of poet, and which we suppose a consequence of modern degeneracy, was active in his time — the day of the greatest poetic literature England has seen. So little has John Bull really changed his ways! Hear Jonson:

"Then men were had in price for learning; now it only makes men vile. He is

upbraidingly called a poet, as if it were a contemptible nickname: but the professors, indeed, have made the learning cheap. Railing and tinkling rhymers, whose writings the vulgar more greedily read, as being taken with the scurrility and petulance of such wits. He shall not have a reader now, unless he jeer and lie. It is the food of men's natures, the diet of the times: gallants cannot sleep else! The writer must lie, and the gentle reader rests happy to hear the worthiest works misinterpreted, the clearest actions obscured, the innocentest life traduced: and in such a license of lying, a field so fruitful of slanders, how can there be matter wanting to his laughter? Hence comes the epidemical infection: for how can they escape the contagion of the writings, whom the virulency of the calumnies hath not staved off from reading?"

Note, by the way, Jonson's curious impersonal use of the word "he," in the sense of the French *on*, or our idiomatic

"you," meaning "such a one," "persons in general." Might not this be a diatribe against the "personal paragraph" and its kind? When, indeed, was that time at which learning was "held in price," which recedes further back as we pursue it? But one soon gets a suspicion that Ben's picture is to be taken with many grains of salt. For presently his complaints take a personal form, and we begin to conjecture that these passages were largely influenced by recent attacks under which the poet himself was smarting. "But," he concludes indignantly, and not unworthily, "they are rather enemies of my fame than me, these barkers." Still, it is an interesting glimpse into Elizabethan literature as it presented itself to an actor in the scene. Such glimpses, and the knowledge of Ben Jonson as a man of sound and incisive judgment no less than a poet, make the *Sylva* interesting apart from its manner. And the style, as we have shown, if not actually great, is

strong, honest, and native, deserving to be considered in any estimate of our earlier English prose.

IV

GOLDSMITH

IN the prose-style of that delightful poet and universal man of letters, Oliver Goldsmith, the man himself counts for so much that it is impossible to write of one without the other. One can trace the derivations of that style, it is true; one can discern that it owes much to French influence. Style does not come out of the blue, be it ever so native to the man, and however authentic his genius. But when you have recognised its Gallic derivation, that which gives it breath of life, and radiates from it in personal fascination, is Goldsmith himself — the careless Goldsmith, the much-tired Goldsmith, the sweet-natured Goldsmith, the Goldsmith who took his troubles like a happy-go-lucky

child: an Irish child withal, bright, emotional, and candid. Yet all this would not have produced the inexpressibly exhilarating mixture we call Goldsmith, limpid and effervescent, touched with the simplest sentiment, enriched with the most varied experience, unfailing in dexterous grace, had this Irish child not been also a child of the eighteenth century. Into this artificial, unruffled eighteenth century, which made composure not merely an inward ideal but an external law, was borne this Celtic child, uttering himself right out with a modern sincerity, and an unconsciousness not often modern. The result, at its best, is a combination of qualities singularly piquant and unreproducible. Born into the nineteenth century with such a temperament, a life so troublous and largely *manqué*, Goldsmith would have had the *weltschmerz* pretty badly. He would have wailed the impossibility of things; he would have taken the bandage from his sores; his

gaiety would have been dashed with some eclipse. Born into the eighteenth century, he had no encouragement to the indulgence of world-smart. He kept his sores under decent covering, knowing there was small sympathy for literary groans; he looked neither back nor forward, took the hour as it came, and piped against his troubles if Fate gave him half a chance. That European tour, when half scholarly impostor, half minstrel, he alternately challenged disputants (not forthcoming) and fluted for a living, is a type of his whole career. The Irishman of that character no longer exists; and if personal dignity gains by his vanishing, the gaiety of nations suffers. No wonder that the dignifiedly Britannic, and a trifle priggish, Johnsonian circle was half scandalised by the advent amongst it of this improvident creature of Nature. Johnson, sternly moralising under adversity, meets Goldie piping against it,

and shakes his unambrosial wig. Yet it says much for the formidable old Doctor that he seems to have appreciated the simple, sweet-natured genius better than the rest of his circle. It is the fashion to discredit Boswell's stories of Goldsmith on the ground of envy. Jealous they self-evidently are, but they are too racy of the Goldsmith soil not to be true. The *naif* vanity is the vanity of a child. One can imagine Goldie breaking his shins in imitating a mountebank — and laugh with kindly amusement. Where talk was supremely valued, he would plunge in, sink or swim. But only that bewigged eighteenth century circle could sneer at him for the harmless weakness. He knew he had the brilliance in him, and pathetically hoped he could teach it to shine at the call of the moment. A little ugly man, slow-tongued and unattractive to women, he sought indemnity for his maimed life in plum-colored coats, Tokay,

and the sorry loves of Covent Garden. "Goldie was wild, sir," and small cause for wonder.

But all that weakness is strength in his charming prose. There was valiance, could the Doctor have seen it, in that clear fountain of gaiety which turned all his misfortunes to brightness and favor. It is his sunny wit and sweet heart which clarifies his style; his lovable humor draws for us perpetual refreshment from the vicissitudes of a life as hard as ever fell to struggling poet. What modern writer is brave child enough to extract sunshine from the recollection of his own darkest hours? A more admirable example you could not have of Goldsmith's prose than that exquisitely sly description of George's search for a living in the *Vicar of Wakefield*. Yet small was the laughter in the experiences which furnished it to poor Goldie; and it was written while he was still struggling for bread. Well-known though it be, one cannot resist quoting

the portion concerning George's *cognoscente* cousin: —

"I was the more surprised at seeing our cousin pitched upon for this office, as he himself had often assured me he knew nothing of the matter. Upon asking how he had been taught the art of a *cognoscente* so very suddenly he assured me that nothing was more easy. The whole secret consisted in a strict adherence to two rules: the one, always to observe that the picture might have been better if the painter had taken more pains; and the other, to praise the works of Pietro Perugino. . . . I was not a little surprised at his intimacy with people of the best fashion, who referred themselves to his judgment upon every picture or medal as an unerring standard of taste. He made very good use of my assistance upon these occasions, for when asked his opinion he would gravely take me aside and ask mine, shrug, look wise, return, and assure the company that he could give

no opinion upon an affair of so much importance. Yet there was sometimes an occasion for a more supported assurance. I remember to have seen him, after giving his opinion that the coloring of a picture was not mellow enough, very deliberately take a brush with brown varnish that was accidentally lying by, and rub it over the piece with great composure, before all the company, and then ask if he had not improved the tints."

The narrative is saturated with humor as delicate as it is buoyant, and kindly with large good nature towards the very rogues and blockheads who have set their heels on the helpless seeker for bread. The mere technique is that of a master: every sentence deftly shaped, yet easy as the song of a bird; the phrase unobtrusively perfect, as we have lost the art of perfecting it in our self-conscious age. He had, indeed, the great heritage of eighteenth century prose, which a succession of masters had shaped to the purposes

of wit and humor. But he had lightened it, made it nimble and touched it with an artless-seeming grace, as it never was before. This in the very day when Johnson had compelled English prose to the following of his own deep-draughted movement. Yet, by a singular stretch of blind jealousy, Boswell and others accused him of imitating the Gargantuan Doctor!

Perhaps Johnson may have had some influence on his serious and "elevated" style, which is antithetic and not a little rhetorical:

"Though poverty and self-contempt are all the wages of his goodwill from mankind, yet the rectitude of his intention is an ample recompense; and self-applause for the present, and the alluring prospect of fame for futurity, reward his labors."

That is much too formal for our modern taste, and, indeed, we care little for Goldsmith when he gets on horseback. Perhaps Johnson, also, taught him compactness

of structure and grammatical accuracy, which are invaluable even in his lightest style. But though he "touched nothing he did not adorn," and was as irresistible in the pathos of poor Olivia as in the humors of Mr. Jenkinson or Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Skeggs, it is as a comedian that one loves him best. That gay humor could pass from demure slyness to the most buoyant farce; and the combination of extravagance with the deftest delicacy is perhaps his most characteristic and felicitous achievement. Beau Tibbs, in the *Citizen of the World*, is farce; but farce which nowadays would pass for comedy. Take — for it is seasonable at this moment — the Beau on the Coronation:

"His whole mind was blazoned over with a variety of glittering images; coronets, escutcheons, lace, fringe, tassels, stones, bugles, and spun glass. 'Here,' cries he, 'Garter is to walk; and there Rouge Dragon marches with the escutch-

eons on his back. Here Clarencieux moves forward; and there Blue Mantle disdains to be left behind. Here the Aldermen march two and two; and there the undaunted Champion of England, no way terrified at the very numerous appearance of gentlemen and ladies, rides forward in complete armor, and, with an intrepid air, throws down the glove. Ah,' continued he, 'should any be so hardy as to take up that fatal glove . . . we should see fine sport; the champion would show him no mercy. . . . However, I am afraid we shall have none willing to try it with him . . . for two reasons; first, because his antagonist would stand a chance of being killed in the single combat; and secondly, because, if he escapes the champion's arm, he would certainly be hanged for treason.'"

But it is the milliner's side of the ceremony that moves Mr. Tibbs to his highest raptures.

"'For my own part,' continued he,

'I know already of fifteen suits of clothes that would stand on one end with gold lace, all designed to be first shown there; and as for diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls, we shall see them as thick as brass nails in a sedan chair. And then we are all to walk so majestically, thus; this foot always behind the foot before. The ladies are to fling nosegays; the Court poets to scatter verses; the spectators are to be all in full dress; Mrs. Tibbs in a new sacque, ruffles, and frenched hair; look where you will, one thing finer than another. Mrs. Tibbs curtsies to the Duchess; her Grace returns the compliment with a bow. "Largess," cries the Herald. "Make room," cries the Gentleman Usher. "Knock him down," cries the guard. Ah,' continued he, amazed at his own description, 'what an astonishing sense of grandeur can art produce from the smallest circumstance when it thus actually turns to wonder one man putting on another man's hat!'"

But Beau Tibbs is too great to be displayed in a mere extract; he must be read entire. Why, indeed, is there no popular reprint of the *Citizen of the World?* Why is Goldsmith unknown at the present day by that delightful series of papers? If the cream of his comedy be in the plays and the *Vicar*, yet, for the sake of Beau Tibbs alone, the *Citizen* should be resuscitated. And if this inadequate article sends one fresh reader to those neglected essays, it will not have been written uselessly.

SARTOR RE-READ

THERE is a certain tremor in returning to a book which has been an *avatar* to one's youth, an author who has been among the authentic gods of one's dawning years. Can that early impression survive the hard light of settled judgment? How many a figure which once loomed to us colossal has shrunk to most human dimensions in that searching light! To one it is the Byron of his youth that has thus wilted away; to another the Tennyson that has revealed unsuspected limitations. However, a final judgment may resolve that the divinity, after all, was there. It is an experiment nigh as dubious as the re-reading of young love-letters. These reflections are suggested to us by turning over the elaborate new

edition of "Sartor Resartus," edited for Messrs. Black by Mr. J. A. S. Barrett. It is an excellent edition in most respects, with a quite admirable introduction; though the incessant foot-notes irritatingly insist on informing us about everything, from the situation of Downing-street to that of Otaheite. But what concerned us was apart from all editions. It was how *Sartor* would read, thus verily *Resartus*, by matured judgment, after having long lain on the shelf of reverencing memory.

On the whole, there was small need for fear. What it loses in perception of defects (and that mostly discounted by general knowledge of the Carlylean weaknesses) it gains by deeper perception of its fundamental depths. What first strikes you is the remaining evidences in it of what one might call the prehistoric Carlyle style. You had not remembered — rather, had not noticed this. At the outset of the book you find sentences of an almost flowing symmetry and orderliness,

well-nigh balance, quite unlooked-for in the author of the *French Revolution.* Take the very first:

"Considering our present advanced state of culture, and how the Torch of Science has now been brandished and borne about, with more or less effect, for five thousand years and upwards; how, in these times especially, not only the torch still burns, and perhaps more fiercely than ever, but innumerable Rush-lights, and sulphur matches, kindled thereat, are also glancing in every direction, so that not the smallest cranny or dog-hole in Nature or Art can remain unilluminated — it might strike the reflective mind with some surprise that hitherto little or nothing of a fundamental character, whether in the way of philosophy or history, has been written on the subject of Clothes."

Had Carlyle never written but so, he would not have perturbed our fathers and grandfathers with such deep dismay, not to say scandal, at his revolutionary as-

saults on the English tongue. But as he warms to his work, he falls into that "Babylonish dialect" which we recognise for genuine Carlylese. The phrase cleaves to it not inaptly for good no less than for ill. It has a certain Babylonian spaciousness of barbaric and primeval grandeur, amazing and imposing, even while it offends a Greek sense of form and clearness. On its ill side he has himself described it with that felicitous and aloof sense of self-criticism which some of the greatest authors possess — believing in themselves far too strongly not to be capable of amused laughter at themselves.

"Of his sentences perhaps not more than nine-tenths stand straight on their legs; the remainder are in quite angular attitudes, buttressed up by props (of parentheses and dashes), and ever with this or the other tag-rag hanging from them; a few even sprawl-out helplessly on all sides, quite broken-backed and dismembered."

That is as severe and true a criticism as could be passed on the mechanics of his style. A more damaging charge is the fact that his peculiarities are so largely imported. The other day we heard a man disrelish Carlyle's style on the ground that he (the speaker) "knew German." It is to be wished that Carlyle were less Germanic: the least tolerable of mannerisms are foreign mannerisms. But under this German vesture the body of his style is, after all, racily English. His way is largely the way of a man condensing remarks in a notebook, and makes for pregnancy. With all his juggling and sword-brandishing, Carlyle's manner is essentially pregnant, hieroglyphic; his packed and gnarled sentences, no less than his constant images, are in the nature of hieroglyphs; the mechanism of his style is indeed the complement of its internal character, and both are labor-saving devices, means for putting much in a little room.

The great passages fall on the ear as splendidly and authoritatively as of yore; they have taken no rust from the inclemency of time. If here and there one finds a passage stilted, an all too deliberate effort after poetic effects in prose, the best have yet the unsought eloquence and elevation of deep personal feeling. They roll like boulders down a mountain slope, with rough, thunderous jar and concussion, yet striking out a harmony in their rugged contact beyond the reach of shaped and quarried law. Fiery and fuliginous (to use his own favored word), with rent and steaming storm-rack of turmoiled imagery, their splendor zig-zags against a ground of murky and jostling utterance, from which they emerge and into which they fall back. Or one might say these sudden and strongly contrasted passages of eloquence which fleck the tortured mass of his general speech are as the blue eye of the typhoon, opening a steady deep in the midst of the

whirling blackness around. Such are some of those fragments in the "Everlasting Yea," or the emergence of Teufelsdröckh on the granite battlements of the Polar Sea.

But *Sartor* is nothing if not a semi-prophetic book, as prophecy goes nowadays: it is in this aspect that it appeals to or repels us; it is its gleams and rifts of truth that focus the attention. For here also Carlyle is every way the reverse of equable and self-contained, moving by stormful and uncertain energies, with sudden swirling sunward rushes, whence he swerves with baffled and beating pinions to collect himself for another upward dart. His teaching, tempestuous and fitful, abounds in cloven profundities of gloom, and luminous interspaces of height. By these, in the main, we must gauge him. Nor must we attribute to him more than he claimed for himself, or deny his limitations. To him Christianity was a dissolved or dissolving myth, the

spirit of which survived, awaiting incarnation in some new and modern *mythus*. To supply that reincarnation he addressed himself; yet in the main awakened only a yearning and most justified dissatisfaction with the sordid age in which he lived, but failed to satisfy the yearning he created. "Carlyle," said Clough, "has led us all out into the wilderness and left us there." Many truths are to be found in him, in this *Sartor* above all; but Truth herself shows flittingly through shifting vapors, doubtful if she were seen at all. In an age of the grossest materiality, no smug "scientific" explanations could loosen his clutch on the perpetual Pentecostal miracle of Nature. He saw and burningly proclaimed her to be manifestly wonderful and prophetic. No rationalism could shut from him the inwardness which was latent in all outwardness; externality almost ceased for him in the miraculous light which permeated and emanated from it. For this and things

like these *Sartor* is most thankworthy. The maturer one is the more one discerns and honors these penetrant glimpses which for an instant make matter translucent. Yet glimpses they are, and instantaneous, transient. Perhaps they could not be otherwise — certainly not in Carlyle. Cloud-tossed and lightning-torn because himself could never get to himself any clear account of what he knew or believed as a whole; because his burning intuitions could never combine into any diffused radiance of system. And those who despise system, be sure, are those who cannot see life whole, but only by brief intensity of levin-flashes which leave behind momentary spaces of clear vision skirted by darkness and "the collied night." Such are apt to confound true system with the iron pedantry which narrows all truth within a brick-built Babel, circumvallated by courses of "logic formulæ" — as Carlyle himself would phrase it. "How paint to the sensual eye what passes

in the Holy-of-Holies of Man's Soul; in what words, known to these profane times, speak even afar off of the unspeakable?" he asks. Which is most true; yet he who confines himself wholly to such swift-dislimning adumbrations of partly glimpsed truths, however super-sensual, cannot claim to be a complete teacher, even on our mundane and imperfect plane of completeness, where Christ Himself did not teach all things, leaving that to the spirit in each man's heart. So Carlyle is a teacher "as in a glass darkly," a teacher by fits and glimpses; from whom they will learn most who least attempt the vanity of systematising him, of "giving an account" of him. So we have seen a photograph of Vesuvius in eruption, where the tightly-defined edges of the voluming vapors were as strenuously false to the truth of nature as they were faithful to the rigid logic of the hard-eyed camera. These volcanic Carlylean shapes of truth you cannot photograph and reduce to

linear definition, mingled as they are with scoriac showers of misperception and even untruth. For least of all men had this eruptive, prejudiced peasant any infallibility. An infallible Scotsman were too frightful a portent for the world or his country to endure. Often, indeed, would we fain display where Carlyle followed hot and fierce as any bloodhound the trail of truth, and where he stopped, suddenly baulked, as by that magic rock-door which shut out the lame boy who pursued the wake of the Pied Piper; but we withhold. For our business here has been a little semi-retrospective criticism, not to prophesy regarding a partial prophet.

DON QUIXOTE

DON QUIXOTE for a paltry two shillings! That is the latest exploit of cheap printing, and Messrs. Bliss, Sands & Co. are responsible for it. I should hope that many, like myself, will be delighted with so easy an opportunity of renewing a delightful acquaintance; and those who have not yet made it have no excuse now for delay. I cannot say I care for the illustrations, which seem to me a peculiarly cheap travesty of the style of Daniel Vierge; but they are few, and need not concern the reader. The translation is the old one of Jarvis. Now, Jarvis was no master of style; but he had the inestimable advantage of living in the eighteenth century, when a fascinating style was in the air, and consequently he is a most pleasant and stimulating change

from the featureless style of the average modern novel. I have spent some charming hours with this treasure brought to my gate. Was there ever so strange a book as this *Don Quixote!* To what class shall we assign it? Solitary, singular, it will not be pigeonholed; your literary entomologists shall ticket it, *genus* and *sub-genus* it, at their peril. It is complex beyond measure. It is a piece of literary duplicity without precedent or succession; nay, duplicity within duplicity, a sword turning all ways, like that which guarded "unpermitted Eden" (to quote a cancelled verse of Rossetti's *Love's Nocturne*). Let not Swift say that he was born to introduce and refine irony. The irony of Cervantes is refined and dangerous beyond the irony of Swift; Swift's is obvious beside it. All irony is double-tongued; but whether it be the irony of Swift, or Swift's predecessors, or Swift's successors, it has this characteristic: that its duplicity is (so to speak) a one-sided

duplicity; if you do not take the inner meaning, you read baffled, without pleasure, without admiration, without comprehension. "Who are you a-getting at?" is the reader's feeling. But this strange irony, this grave irony, this broadly-laughing irony, of the strange, grave, humorous Spaniard, delights even those who have not a touch of the ironic in their composition. They laugh at the comic mask, who cannot see the melancholy face behind it. It is the Knight of the Rueful Countenance in the vizard of Sancho Panza; and all laugh, while some few have tears in their laughter. "Ha! ha!" guffaw the many; "well, to be sure, what an ass is this Don Quixote, and how vastly diverting are his absurd doings! Ha! ha!" And they know not that their derision is derided; that they are trapped and cozened into jeers; that Cervantes, from behind his mask, beholds their fat-witted grins with a sardonic smile.

A core of scornful and melancholy protest, set about with a pulp of satire, and outside all a rind of thick burlesque — that is *Don Quixote*. It never "laughed Spain's chivalry away." Chivalry was no more in a country where it could be written. Where it could be thought an impeachment of idealism, idealism had ceased to be. Against this very state of things its secret but lofty contempt is aimed. Herein lies its curious complexity. Outwardly Cervantes falls in with the waxing materialism of his day, and professes to satirise everything that is chivalrous and ideal. Behind all that, is subtle, suppressed, mordant satire of the material spirit in all its forms: the clownish materialism of the boor; the comfortable materialism of the *bourgeois;* the pedantic materialism of the scholar and the mundane cleric; the idle, luxurious, arrogant materialism of the noble — all agreeing in derisive conceit of superiority to the poor madman who still believes in grave,

exalted, heroic ideas of life and duty. Finally, at the deepmost core of the strange and wonderful satire, in which the hidden mockery is so opposite to the seeming mockery, lies a sympathy even to tears with all height and heroism insulated and out of date, mad to the eyes of a purblind world: nay, a bitter confession that such nobility is, indeed, mad and phantasmal, in so much as it imputes its own greatness to a petty and clay-content society. Even Sancho is held up to admiration mixed with smiles, because he has the dim yet tough insight to follow what he does not understand, yet obscurely feels to be worthy of love and following. The author of the heroic *Numantia* a contemner of the lofty and ideal! It could not be. Surely Don Quixote has much of the writer's self; of his poetic discontent with the earthly and money-seeking society around him. There is no true laughter in literature with such a hidden sadness as that of Cervantes.

Yet it is laughter, and not all sad. The man is a humorist, and feels that if the world be full of mournful humor, yet life would go nigh to madness if there were not some honest laughter as well — laughter from the full lungs. Therefore he gives us Sancho — rich, unctuous, Shakespearean humor to the marrow of him. The mockers of the Don, with their practical jests on him, furnish the understanding reader with but pitying and half-reluctant laughter; but the faithful compost of fat and flesh who cleaves to the meagre visionary allows us mirth unstinted and unqualified. Many a touch in this creation of the great Spaniard reminds us of like touches in the greatest of Englishmen. Sancho's blunt rejection of titles, for example: "Don does not belong to me, nor ever did to any of my family: I am called plain Sancho Panza, my father was a Sancho, and my grandfather a Sancho, and they were all Panzas, without any addition of Dons or Donnas."

Who does not remember at once the drunken tinker's "What! am I not Christopher Sly?" &c. The two passages are delightfully kindred in style and humor. How like, too, is Sancho's meandering telling of his story at the Duke's table, and Dame Quickly's narrative style, when she recount's Falstaff's promise of marriage! Unadulterated peasant nature both — the same in Spain as in Eastcheap. What more gloriously characteristic than Sancho's rebutting of the charge that he may prove ungrateful in advancement to high station? "Souls like mine are covered four inches thick with the grease of the old Christian." But enough. With all the inward gravity of his irony, Cervantes has abundantly provided that we need not take his seriousness too seriously: there is laughter in rivers, even for those who enter deepest into that grave core. We do not deny that he laughs himself at his Knight, as an idealist can laugh at his own extrava-

gances; and invites you to laugh too — with the laughter which does homage to what is laughed at. And this many-sided masterpiece of Spain and the world is now at anyone's command for two shillings! "Let those read now who never read before; and those who always read now read the more."

MOESTITIAE ENCOMIUM

MARSH, and night.

There are sounds; no man shall say what sounds. There are shadows; no man shall say what shadows. There is light; were there not shadow, no man should call it light. The landscape is a sketch blotted in with smoke of Erebus, and greys from the cheek of death: those trees which threaten from the horizon — they are ranked apparitions, no boon of gracious God. The heaven is a blear copy of the land. Athwart the saturnine march, runs long, pitilessly straight, ghastly with an inward pallor (for no gleam dwells on it from the sky), the leprous, pined, infernal watercourse; a water for the Plutonian naiads — exhaling cold perturbation. It is a stream, a land, a heaven, per-

nicious to the heart of man; created only for —

> The abhorred estate
> Of empty shades, and disembodied elves.

Over this comes up of a sudden an unlawful moon; pores wickedly upon all. My very heart blanches. But a voice which is not the voice of reed, or sedge, or flag, or wind, yet is as the voice of each, says: "Fear not; it is I, whom you know." I know her, this power, that has parted from the side of Terror; she is Sadness, and we are companions of old. Yet not here am I most familiar with her presence; far oftener have I found her lurking in the blocked-out, weighty shadows which fall from the tyrannous sun. We love the tyrannous sun, she and I.

I know her, for I am of the age, and the age is hers. Alas for this nineteenth century, by grace of its science-mongers "enlightened!" With so much pleasure, and so little joy; so much learning, and

so little wisdom; so much effort, and so little fruition; so many philosophers, and such little philosophy; so many seers, and such little vision; so many prophets, and such little foresight; so many teachers, and such an infinite wild vortex of doubt! Poor, purblind, miserable century; let it cease to call itself "enlightened," and rather own itself, with all heaviness, in world-wide impenetrable darkness — the saddest of recorded ages. The one divine thing left to us, in these latter days, is Sadness. Even our virtues take her stamp; the intimacy of our loves is born of despair; our very gentleness to our children is because we know how short their time. "Eat," we say, "eat, drink, and be merry; for to-morrow — ye are men."

I know her; and praise, knowing. Foolishly we shun this shunless Sadness; fondly we deem of her as but huntress of men, who is tender and the bringer of tenderness to those she visits with her fearful favors. A world without joy were more

tolerable than a world without sorrow. Without sadness where were brotherliness? For in joy is no brotherliness, but only a boon-companionship. She is the Spartan sauce which gives gust to the remainder-viands of life, the broken meats of love. "The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Her servitors rise in the hierarchy of being: to woman, in particular, hardly comes the gracious gift of sweetness, till her soul has been excavated by pain. Even a dog in sadness is nearer to the level and the heart of man. She has her dark *accolade*, her sombre patents of nobility; but the titles of that abhorred peerage are clemently and benignly unsuccessive. Our sweetest songs are from her, Shelley knew; but he needed not to have limited the benefaction by song. She is not fair, poor Grief; yet in her gift is highest fairness. Love, says Plato, is unbeautiful: yet Love makes all things beautiful. And all things take on

beauty which pass into the hueless flame of *her* aureole. It may chance to one faring through a wet grey day-fall, that suddenly from behind him spurts the light of the sinking sun. Instantly the far windows of unseen homesteads break into flash through the rain-smoke, the meads run over with yellow light, the scattered trees are splashed with saffron. He turns about towards the fountain of the splendorous surprise — sees but a weeping sundown of pallid and sickly gold. So throughout humanity my eyes discern a mourning loveliness; so I turn expectant — What, pale Sorrow? Could all this have been indeed from you? And give you so much beauty that no dower of it remains for your own? Nay, but my vision was unversed when I disvalued her comeliness, and I looked not with the looking of her lovers. Nay, but to our weak mortality the extremity of immitigate beauty is inapprehensible save through reflection and dilution. Sorrow is fair with an unmortal fairness, which we

see not till it is humanised in the sorrowful. The sweetest smiles I know, her rod draws forth from the rock of an abiding melancholy; the faces which haunt me from canvas attest that *she* prescribed to the painter's hand; of the most beautiful among the sons of men, it is recorded that, though many had seen Him weep, no man had seen Him smile. Nor with beauty end her gifts to men. Solomon, who found in knowledge but increase of sorrow, might have found in sorrow increase of knowledge: it is less wisdom that reveals mourning, than mourning that reveals wisdom — as the Indian gathers secret things from gazing in the pool of ink. Power is the reward of sadness. It was after the Christ had wept over Jerusalem that He uttered some of His most august words; it was when His soul had been sorrowful even unto death, that His enemies fell prostrate before His voice. Who suffers, conquers. The bruised is the breaker. By torture the Indians try their braves;

by torture Life, too, tries the elected victors of her untriumphal triumphs, and of cypress is the commemoration on their brows. Sadness the king-maker! *morituri te salutant!*

Come, therefore, O Sadness, fair and froward and tender; wasp who followest the fliers; dolorous coquette of the Abyss, who claspest them that shun thee, with fierce kisses that hiss against their tears; wraith of the mists of sighs; mermaid of the flood Cocytus, of the waves which are salt with the weeping of the generations; most menacing seductress, whose harp is stringed with lamentations, whose voice is fatal with disastrous prescience; draw me down, merge me, under thy waters of wail! Of thy undesired loveliness am I desirous, for I have looked long on thy countenance, and can forget it not, nor the footfalls of thy majesty which still shake the precincts of my heart: under the fringed awnings of the sunsets thou art throned, and *thy* face parts the enfolding pavilions of the

Evens; thou art very dear to the heart of Night; thou art mistress of the things unmetable which are dreadful to meted life, mistress of the barren heath and the barren soul of man, mistress of the weepings of death and of birth; the cry of the bride is thine and the pang of the first kiss, the pain which is mortise to delight, the flowers which trail between the ruined chaps of mortality, the over-foliaging death which checquers all human suns. Of thy beauty undesired am I desirous, for knowledge is with thee, and dominion, and piercing, and healing; thou woundest with a thorn of light; thou sittest portress by the gates of hearts; and a sceptred quiet rests regal in thine eyes' sepulchral solitudes, in the tenebrous desolations of thine eyes!

"The over-foliaging death which checquers all human suns." Even so. Not by Cocytus is delimited her delimitless realm. For I have a vision; and the manner of the vision is this. I see the Angel of life. It (for it may be of either sex)

is a mighty grey-winged Angel, with bowed and hidden face, looking into the river of life. And sometimes a waver of sunshine rests upon its grey wings and folded veil, so that I seem to see its face, and to see it exceeding beautiful; and then again the sunlight fades, and I dare not attempt to penetrate that veil, for I imagine the countenance exceeding awful. And I see that within its sad drapery the Angel weeps, and its tears fall into the water of life: but whether they be tears of joy or sorrow, only its Creator knows, not I. I have tasted the water of life where the tears of the Angel fell; and the taste was bitter as brine.

Then, say you, they were tears of sorrow?

The tears of joy are salt, as well as the tears of sorrow. And in that sentence are many meanings and much meaning, which he who runs will not read.

FINIS CORONAT OPUS

IN a city of the future, among a people bearing a name I know not, lived Florentian the poet, whose place was high in the retinue of Fortune. Young, noble, popular, influential, he had succeeded to a rich inheritance, and possessed the natural gifts which gain the love of women. But the seductions which Florentian followed were darker and more baleful than the seductions of women; for they were the seductions of knowledge and intellectual pride. In very early years he had passed from the pursuit of natural to the pursuit of unlawful science; he had conquered power where conquest is disaster, and power servitude. But the ambition thus gratified had elsewhere suffered check. It was the custom of this people

that he among their poets who by universal acclaim outsoared all competitors, should be crowned with laurel in public ceremony. Now between Florentian and this distinction there stood a rival. Seraphin was a spirit of higher reach than Florentian, and the time was nearing fast when even the slow eyes of the people must be opened to a supremacy which Florentian himself acknowledged in his own heart. Hence arose in his lawless soul an insane passion; so that all which he had, seemed to him as nothing beside that which he had not, and the compassing of this barred achievement became to him the one worthy object of existence. Repeated essay only proved to him the inadequacy of his native genius, and he turned for aid to the power which he served. Nor was the power of evil slow to respond. It promised him assistance that should procure him his heart's desire, but demanded in return a crime before which even the unscrupulous selfishness of Florentian

paled. For he had sought and won the hand of Aster, daughter to the Lady Urania, and the sacrifice demanded from him was no other than the sacrifice of his betrothed, the playmate of his childhood. The horror of such a suggestion prevailed for a time over his unslacked ambition. But he, who believed himself a strong worker of ill, was in reality a weak follower of it: he believed himself a Vathek, he was but a Faust: continuous pressure and gradual familiarisation could warp him to any sin. Moreover his love for Aster had been gradually and unconsciously sapped by the habitual practice of evil. So God smote Florentian, that his antidote became to him his poison, and love the regenerator love the destroyer. A strong man, he might have been saved by love: a weak man he was damned by it.

The palace of Florentian was isolated in the environs of the city; and on the night before his marriage he stood in the room known to his domestics as the

Chamber of Statues. Both its appearance, and the sounds which (his servants averred) sometimes issued from it, contributed to secure for him the seclusion that he desired whenever he sought this room. It was a chamber in many ways strongly characteristic of its owner, a chamber "like his desires lift upwards and exalt," but neither wide nor far-penetrating; while its furnishing revealed his fantastic and somewhat childish fancy. At the extremity which faced the door there stood, beneath a crucifix, a small marble altar, on which burned a fire of that strange greenish tinge communicated by certain salts. Except at this extremity, the walls were draped with deep violet curtains bordered by tawny gold, only half displayed by the partial illumination of the place. The light was furnished from lamps of colored glass, sparsely hung along the length of the room, but numerously clustered about the altar: lamps of diverse tints, amber, peacock-blue, and

changefully mingled harmonies of green like the scales on a beetle's back. Above them were coiled thinnest serpentinings of suspended crystal, hued like the tongues in a wintry hearth, flame-color, violet, and green; so that as in the heated current from the lamps the snakes twirled and flickered, and their bright shadows twirled upon the wall, they seemed at length to undulate their twines, and the whole altar became surrounded with a fiery fantasy of sinuous stains. On the right hand side of the chamber there rose — appearing almost animated in the half lustre — three statues of colossal height, painted to resemble life; for in this matter Florentian followed the taste of the ancient Greeks. They were statues of three poets, and, not insignificantly, of three pagan poets. The two first, Homer and Æschylus, presented no singularity beyond their Titanic proportions; but it was altogether otherwise with the third statue, which was unusual in conception. It was the figure

of Virgil; not the Virgil whom *we* know, but the Virgil of mediæval legend, Virgil magician and poet. It bent forwards and downwards towards the spectator; its head was uncircled by any laurel, but on the flowing locks was an impression as of where the wreath had rested; its lowered left hand proffered the magician's rod, its outstretched right poised between light finger-tips the wreath of gilded metal whose impress seemed to linger on its hair: the action was as though it were about to place the laurel on the head of someone beneath. This was the carved embodiment of Florentian's fanatical ambition, a perpetual memento of the double end at which his life was aimed. On the necromancer's rod he could lay his hand, but the laurel of poetic supremacy hung yet beyond his reach. The opposite side of the chamber had but one object to arrest attention: a curious head upon a pedestal, a head of copper with a silver beard, the features not unlike those of

a Pan, and the tongue protruded as in derision. This, with a large antique clock, completed the noticeable garniture of the room.

Up and down this apartment Florentian paced for long, his countenance expressive of inward struggle, till his gaze fell upon the figure of Virgil. His face grew hard; with an air of sudden decision he began to act. Taking from its place the crucifix he threw it on the ground; taking from its pedestal the head he set it on the altar; and it seemed to Florentian as if he reared therewith a demon on the altar of his heart, round which also coiled burning serpents. He sprinkled, in the flame which burned before the head, some drops from a vial; he wounded his arm, and moistened from the wound the idol's tongue, and, stepping back, he set his foot upon the prostrate cross.

A darkness rose like a fountain from the altar, and curled downward through the room as wine through water, until

every light was obliterated. Then, from out the darkness grew gradually the visage of the idol, soaked with fire; its face was as the planet Mars, its beard as white-hot wire that seethed and crept with heat; and there issued from the lips a voice that threw Florentian on the ground: "Whom seekest thou?" Twice was the question repeated; and then, as if the display of power were sufficient, the gloom gathered up its edges like a mantle and swept inwards towards the altar; where it settled in a cloud so dense as to eclipse even the visage of fire. A voice came forth again; but a voice that sounded not the same; a voice that seemed to have withered in crossing the confines of existence, and to traverse illimitable remotenesses beyond the imagining of man; a voice melancholy with a boundless calm, the calm not of a crystalline peace but a marmoreal despair, "Knowest thou me; what I am?"

Vanity of man! He who had fallen prostrate before this power now rose to his feet with a haughty answer, "My deity and my slave!"

The unmoved voice held on its way.

"Scarce high enough for thy deity; too high for thy slave. I am pain exceeding great; and the desolation that is at the heart of things, in the barren heath and the barren soul. I am terror without beauty, and force without strength, and sin without delight. I beat my wings against the cope of Eternity, as thou thine against the window of Time. Thou knowest me not, but I know thee, Florentian, what thou art and what thou wouldst. Thou wouldst have and wouldst not give, thou wouldst not render, yet wouldst receive. This cannot be with me. Thou art but half baptized with my baptism, yet wouldst have thy supreme desire. In thine own blood thou wast baptized, and I gave my power to serve thee;

thou wouldst have my spirit to inspire thee — thou must be baptized in blood not thine own!"

"Any way but one way!" said Florentian, shuddering.

"One way: no other way. Knowest thou not that in wedding thee to her thou givest me a rival? Thinkest thou my spirit can dwell beside her spirit? Thou must renounce her or me: aye, thou wilt lose not only all thou dreadest to sin for, but all thou hast already sinned for. Render me her body for my temple, and I render thee my spirit to inhabit it. This supreme price thou must pay for thy supreme wish. I ask not her soul. Give that to the God Whom she serves, give her body to me whom thou servest. Why hesitate? It is too late to hesitate, for the time is at hand to act. Choose, before this cloud dissolve which is now dissolving. But remember: thine ambition thou mightest have had; love thou art too deep damned to have."

The cloud turned from black to grey.

"I consent!" cried Florentian, impetuously.

It dissolved.

FLORENTIAN'S RECORD.

Three years — what years! since I planted in a grave the laurel which will soon now reach its height; and the fatal memory is heavy upon me, the shadow of my laurel is as the shadow of funeral yew. If confession indeed give ease, I, who am deprived of all other confession, may yet find some appeasement in confessing to this paper. I am not penitent; yet I will do fiercest penance. With the scourge of inexorable recollection, I will tear open my scars. With the cuts of a pitiless analysis I make the post-mortem examen of my crime.

Even now can I feel the passions of that moment when (since the forefated hour was not till midnight), leaving her under the influence of the merciful potion

which should save *her* from the agony of knowledge and *me* from the agony of knowing that she knew, I sought, in the air of night and in hurrying swiftness, the resolution of which she had deprived me. The glow-worm lamps went out as I sped by, the stars in rainy pools leaped up and went out, too, as if both worm and star were quenched by the shadow of my passing, until I stopped exhausted on the bridge, and looked down into the river. How dark it ran, how deep, how pauseless; how unruffled by a memory of its ancestral hills! Wisely unruffled, perchance. When it first danced down from its native source, did it not predestine all the issues of its current, every darkness through which it should flow, every bough which it should break, every leaf which it should whirl down in its way? Could it if it would revoke its waters, and run upward to the holy hills? No; the first step includes all sequent steps; when I did my first evil, I did also

this evil; years ago had this shaft been launched, though it was but now curving to its mark; years ago had I smitten her, though she was but now staggering to her fall. Yet I hesitated to act who had already acted, I ruffled my current which I could not draw in! When at length, after long wandering, I retraced my steps, I had not resolved, I had recognised that I could resolve no longer.

* * * * * *

She only cried three times. Three times, O my God!— no, not *my* God.

* * * * * *

It was close on midnight, and I felt her only, she was not visible, as she lay at the feet of Virgil, magician and poet. The lamp had fallen from my hand, and I dared not relume it. I even placed myself between her and the light of the altar, though the salt-green fire was but the spectre of a flame. I reared my arm; I shook; I faltered. At that moment,

with a deadly voice, the accomplice-hour gave forth its sinister command.

I swear I struck not the first blow. Some violence seized my hand, and drove the poniard down. Whereat she cried; and I, frenzied, dreading detection, dreading, above all, her wakening, I struck again, and again she cried; and yet again, and yet again she cried. Then — her eyes opened. I *saw* them open, through the gloom I saw them; through the gloom they were revealed to me, that I might see them to my hour of death. An awful recognition, an unspeakable consciousness grew slowly into them. Motionless with horror they were fixed on mine, motionless with horror mine were fixed on them, as she wakened into death.

How long had I seen them? I saw them still. There was a buzzing in my brain as if a bell had ceased to toll. How long had it ceased to toll? I know not. Has any bell been tolling? I know not. All my senses are resolved into one sense, and

that is frozen to those eyes. Silence now, at least; abysmal silence; except the sound (or is the sound in me?) the sound of dripping blood; except that the flame upon the altar sputters, and hisses, and bickers, as if it licked its jaws. Yes, there is another sound — hush! hark! — It is the throbbing of my heart. Not — no, nevermore the throbbing of *her* heart! The loud pulse dies slowly away, as I hope my life is dying; and again I hear the licking of the flame.

A mirror hung opposite to me, and for a second, in some mysterious manner, without ever ceasing to behold the eyes, I beheld also the mirrored flame. The hideous, green, writhing tongue was streaked and flaked with *red!* I swooned, if swoon it can be called; swooned to the mirror, swooned to all about me, swooned to myself, but swooned not to those eyes.

Strange, that no one has taken me, me for such long hours shackled in a gaze! It is night again, is it not? Nay, I re

member, I have swooned; what now stirs me from my stupor? Light; the guilty gloom is shuddering at the first sick rays of day. Light? not that, not that; anything but that! Ah! the horrible traitorous light, that will denounce me to myself, that will unshroud to me my dead, that will show me all the monstrous fact! I swooned indeed.

When I recovered consciousness, It was risen from the ground, and kissed me with the kisses of Its mouth.

* * * * * *

They told me during the day that the great bell of the cathedral, though no man rang it, had sounded thrice at midnight. It was not a fancy, therefore, that I heard a bell toll *there*, where — when she cried three times. And they asked me jestingly if marriage was ageing me already. I took a mirror to find what they meant. On my forehead were graven three deep wrinkles; and in the locks which fell over my right shoulder

I beheld, long and prominent, three white hairs. I carry those marks to this hour. They and a dark stain on the floor at the feet of Virgil are the sole witnesses to that night.

It is three years, I have said, since then; and how have I prospered? Has Tartarus fulfilled its terms of contract, as I faithfully and frightfully fulfilled mine? Yes. In the course which I have driven through every obstacle and every scruple, I have followed at least no phantom-lure. I have risen to the heights of my aspiration, I have overtopped my sole rival. True, it is a tinsel renown; true, Seraphin is still the light-bearer, I, but a dragon vomiting infernal fire and smoke which sets the crowd a-gaping. But it is your nature to gape, my good friend of the crowd, and I would have you gape at me. If you prefer to Jove Jove's imitator, what use to be Jove? "Gods!" you cry; "what a clatter of swift-footed steeds, and clangor of rapid rolling brazen

wheels, and vibrating glare of lamps! Surely, the thunder-maned horses of heaven, the chariot of Olympus; and you must be the mighty Thunderer himself, with the flashing of his awful bolts!" Not so, my short-sighted friend: very laughably otherwise. It is but vain old Salmoneus, gone mad in Elis. I know you, and I know myself. I have what I would have. I work for the present: let Seraphin have the moonshine future, if he lust after it. Present renown means present power: it suffices me that I am supreme in the eyes of my fellow-men. A year since was the laurel decreed to me, and a day ordained for the ceremony: it was only postponed to the present year because of what they thought my calamity. They accounted it calamity, and knew not that it was deliverance. For my ambition achieved, the compact by which I had achieved it ended, and the demon who had inspired forsook me. Discovery was impossible. A death sudden but natural:

how could men know that it was death of the two years dead? I drew breath at length in freedom. For two years It had spoken to me with her lips, used her gestures, smiled her smile: — ingenuity of hell! —for two years the breathing Murder brought before me and tortured me in a hundred ways with the living desecration of her form. Now, relief unspeakable! that vindictive sleuthhound of my sin has at last lagged from the trail; I have had a year of respite, of release from all torments but those native to my breast; in four days I shall receive the solemn gift of what I already virtually hold; and now, surely, I exult in fruition. If the approach of possession brought not also the approach of recollection, if — Rest, O rest, sad ghost! Is thy grave not deep enough, or the world wide enough, that thou must needs walk the haunted precincts of my heart? Are not spectres there too many, without thee?

LATER IN THE SAME DAY.

A strange thing has happened to me — if I ought not rather to write a strange nothing. After laying down my pen, I rose and went to the window. I felt the need of some distraction, of escaping from myself. The day, a day in the late autumn, a day of keen winds but bright sunshine, tempted me out: so putting on cap and mantle I sallied into the country, where winter pitched his tent on fields yet reddened with the rout of summer. I chose a sheltered lane, whose hedgerows, little visited by the gust, still retained much verdure; and I walked along, gazing with a sense of physical refreshment at the now rare green. As my eyes so wandered, while the mind for a time let slip its care, they were casually caught by the somewhat peculiar trace which a leaf-eating caterpillar had left on one of the leaves. I carelessly outstretched my hand, plucked from the hedge the leaf, and examined it as

I strolled. The marking — a large marking which traversed the greater part of the surface — took the shape of a rude but distinct figure, the figure 3. Such a circumstance, thought I, might by a superstitious man be given a personal application; and I fell idly to speculating how it might be applied to myself. Curious! — I stirred uneasily; I felt my cheek pale, and a chill which was not from the weather creep through me. Three years since *that;* three strokes — three cries — three tolls of the bell — three lines on my brow — three white hairs in my head! I laughed: but the laugh rang false. Then I said, "Childishness!", threw the leaf away, walked on, hesitated, walked back, picked it up, walked on again, looked at it again. Then, finding I could not laugh myself out of the fancy, I began to reason myself out of it. Even were a supernatural warning probable, a warning refers not to the past but to the future. This referred only to the past, it told me

only what I knew already. *Could* it refer to the future? To the bestowal of the laurel? No; that was four days hence, and on the same day was the anniversary of what I feared to name, even in thought. Suddenly I stood still, stabbed to the heart by an idea. I was wrong. The enlaurelling had been postponed to a year from the day on which my supposed affliction was discovered. Now this, although it took place on the day of terrible anniversary, was not known until the day ensuing. Consequently, though it wanted four days to the bestowal of the laurel, it lacked but three days to the date of my crime. The chain of coincidence was complete. I dropped the leaf as if it had death in it, and strove to evade, by rapid motion and thinking of other things, the idea which appalled me. But, as a man walking in a mist circles continually to the point from which he started, so in whatever direction I turned the footsteps of my mind, they wandered back to that unabandonable

thought. I returned trembling to the house.

Of course it is nothing; a mere coincidence, that is all. Yes; a mere coincidence, perhaps, if it had been *one* coincidence. But when it is seven coincidences! Three stabs, three cries, three tolls, three lines, three hairs, three years, three days; and on the very date when these coincidences meet, the key to them is put into my hands by the casual work of an insect on a casual leaf, casually plucked. This day alone of all days in my life the scattered rays converge; they are instantly focussed and flashed on my mind by a leaf! It may be a coincidence, only a coincidence; but it is a coincidence at which my marrow sets. I will write no further till the day comes, lest I should go mad. If by that time anything has happened to confirm my dread, I will record what has chanced.

One thing broods over me with the oppression of certainty. If this incident be

indeed a warning that but three days stand as barriers between me and nearing justice, then doom will come upon me at the unforgettable minute when it came on her.

* * * * * *

THE THIRD DAY.

It is an hour before midnight, and I sit in my room of statues. I dare not sleep if I could sleep; and I write, because the rushing thoughts move slower through the turnstile of expression. I have chosen this place to make what may be my last vigil and last notes, partly from obedience to an inexplicable yet comprehensible fascination, partly from a deliberate resolve. I would face the lightning of vengeance on the very spot where I most tempt its stroke, that if it strike not I may cease to fear its striking. Here then I sit to tease with final questioning the Sibyl of my destiny. With *final* questioning; for never since the first shock have I ceased to question her, nor she to

return me riddling answers. She unrolls her volume till my sight and heart ache at it together. I have been struck by innumerable deaths; I have perished under a fresh doom every day, every hour — in these last hours, every minute. I write in black thought, and tear as soon as written, guess after guess at fate till the floor of my brain is littered with them.

That the deed has been discovered — that seems to me most probable, that is the conjecture which oftenest recurs. Appallingly probable! Yet how improbable, could I only reason it. Aye, but I cannot reason it. What reason will be left me, if I survive this hour? What, indeed, have I to do with reason, or has reason to do with this, where all is beyond reason, where the very foundation of my dread is unassailable simply because it is unreasonable? What crime can be interred so cunningly, but it will toss in its grave, and tumble the sleeked earth above it? Or some hidden witness may have beheld me,

or the prudently kept imprudence of this writing may have encountered some unsuspected eye. In any case the issue is the same; the hour which struck down her will also strike down me: I shall perish on the scaffold or at the stake, unaided by my occult powers; for I serve a master who is the prince of cowards, and can only fight from ambush. Be it by these ways, or by any of the countless intricacies that my restless mind has unravelled, the vengeance will come: its occasion may be an accident of the instant, a wandering mote of chance; but the vengeance is preordained and inevitable. When the Alpine avalanche is poised for descent, the most trivial cause — a casual shout — will suffice to start the loosened ruin on its way; and so the mere echoes of the clock that beats out midnight will disintegrate upon me the precipitant wrath.

Repent? Nay, nay, it could not have been otherwise than it was; the defile was closed behind me, I could but go forward.

If I was merciless to her, was I not more merciless to myself; could I hesitate to sacrifice her life, who did not hesitate to sacrifice my soul? I do not repent, I cannot repent; it is a thing for inconsequent weaklings. To repent your purposes is comprehensible, to repent your deeds most futile. To shake the tree, and then not gather the fruit — a fool's act! Aye, but if the fruit be not worth the gathering? If this fame was not worth the sinning for — this fame, with the multitude's clapping hands half-drowned by the growl of wings that comes in gusts through the unbarred gate of hell? If I am miserable with it, and might have been happy without it? With her without ambition — yes, it might have been. Wife and child! I have more in my heart than I have hitherto written. I have an intermittent pang of loss. Yes, I, murderer, worse than murderer, have still passions that are not deadly, but tender.

I met a child to-day; a child with great

candor of eyes. They who talk of children's instincts are at fault: she knew not that hell was in my soul, she knew only that softness was in my gaze. She had been gathering wild flowers, and offered them to me. To me! to *me!* I was inexpressibly touched and pleased, curiously touched and pleased. I spoke to her gently, and with open confidence she began to talk. Heaven knows it was little enough she talked of! Commonest common things, pettiest childish things, fondest foolish things. Of her school, her toys, the strawberries in her garden, her little brothers and sisters — nothing surely, to interest any man. Yet I listened enchanted. How simple it all was; how strange, how wonderful, how sweet! And she knew not that my eyes were anhungered of her, she knew not that my ears were gluttonous of her speech, she could not have understood it had I told her; none could, none. For all this exquisiteness is among the commonplaces of life to other men like the raiment

they indue at rising, like the bread they weary of eating, like the daisies they trample under blind feet; knowing not what raiment is to him who has felt the ravening wind, knowing not what bread is to him who has lacked all bread, knowing not what daisies are to him whose feet have wandered in grime. How can these elves be to such a man what they are to me, who am damned to the eternal loss of them? Why was I never told that the laurel could soothe no hunger, that the laurel could staunch no pang, that the laurel could return no kiss? But needed I to be told it, did I not know it? Yes, my brain knew it, my heart knew it not. And now —.

HALF-PAST ELEVEN.

O lente, lente currite, noctis equi!

Just! they are the words of that other trafficker in his own soul.[1] Me, like him, the time tracks swiftly down; I can fly

[1] Faustus, in the last scene of Marlowe's play.

no farther, I fall exhausted, the fanged hour fastens on my throat: they will break into the room, my guilt will burst its grave and point at me; I shall be seized, I shall be condemned, I shall be executed; I shall be no longer I, but a nameless lump on which they pasture worms. Or perhaps the hour will herald some yet worser thing, some sudden death, some undreamable, ghastly surprise — ah! what is that at the door there, that, that with *her* eyes? Nothing: the door is shut. Surely, surely, I am not to die now? Destiny steals upon a man asleep or off his guard, not when he is awake, as I am awake, at watch, as I am at watch, wide-eyed, vigilant, alert. Oh, miserable hope! Watch the eaves of your house, to bar the melting of the snow; or guard the gateways of the clouds, to bar the forthgoing of the lightning; or guard the four quarters of the heavens, to bar the way of the winds: but what prescient hand can close the Hecatompylæ of fate, what might arrest the hurrying retribu-

tions whose multitudinous tramplings converge upon me in a hundred presages, in a hundred shrivelling menaces, down all the echoing avenues of doom? It is but a question of which shall arrive the fleetest and the first. I cease to think. I am all a waiting and a fear. TWELVE!

AT HALF-PAST TWO.

Midnight is stricken, and I am unstricken. Guilt, indeed, makes babies of the wisest. My very ink must blush to make the record — nothing happened; absolutely nothing. For two hours I watched with lessening expectance: still nothing. I laughed aloud between sudden light-heartedness and scorn. Ineffable fool that I was, I had conjured up death, judgment, doom — heaven knows what, all because a caterpillar had crawled along a leaf! And then, as I might have done before had not terror vitiated my reason, I made essay whether I still retained my power. I retain it.

Let me set down for my enhardiment what the oracle replied to my questioning.

"Have I not promised and kept my promise, shall I not promise and keep? You would be crowned and you shall be crowned. Does your way to achievement lie through misery? — is not that the way to all worth the achieving? Are not half the mill-wheels of the world turned by waters of pain? Mountain summit that would rise into the clouds, can you not suffer the eternal snows? If your heart fail you, turn; I chain you not. I will restore you your oath. I will cancel your bond. Go to the God Who has tenderness for such weaklings: *my* service requires the strong."

What a slave of my fancy was I! Excellent fool! what, pay the forfeit of my sin and forego the recompense, recoil from the very gates of conquest? I fear no longer: the crisis is past, the day of promise has begun, I go forward to my destiny; I triumph.

Florentian laid down the pen, and passed into dreams. He saw the crowd, the throne, the waiting laurel, the sunshine, the flashing of rich robes; he heard the universal shout of acclaim, he felt the flush of intoxicating pride. He rose, his form dilating with exultation, and passed, lamp in hand, to the foot of the third statue. The colossal figure leaned above him with its outstretched laurel, its proffered wand, its melancholy face and flowing hair; so lifelike was it that in the wavering flame of the lamp the laurel seemed to move. "At length, Virgil," said Florentian, "at length I am equal with you; equal with you in power, equal with you in renown; Virgil, magician and poet, your crown shall descend on me!"

One! Two! Three! The strokes of the great clock shook the chamber, shook the statues; and after the strokes had ceased, the echoes were still prolonged. Was it only an echo?

Boom!

Or — *was it the cathedral bell?*

Boom!

It *was* the cathedral-bell. Yet a third time, sombre, surly, ominous as the bay of a nearing bloodhound, the sound came down the wind.

Boom!

Horror clutched his heart. He looked up at the statue. He turned to fly. But a few hairs, tangled round the lowered wand, for a single instant held him like a cord. He knew, without seeing, that they were the three white hairs.

. . . . .

When, later in the day, a deputation of officials came to escort Florentian to the place fixed for his coronation, they were informed that he had been all night in his Chamber of Statues, nor had he yet made his appearance. They waited while the servant left to fetch him. The man was away some time, and they talked gaily as they waited: a bird beat its wings at the window; through the open door came in a

stream of sunlight, and the fragmentary song of a young girl passing:

Oh, syne she tripped, and syne she ran
(The water-lily's a lightsome flower),
All for joy and sunshine weather
The lily and Marjorie danced together,
As he came down from Langley Tower.

There's a blackbird sits on Langley Tower,
And a throstle on Glenlindy's tree;
The throstle sings "Robin, my heart's love!"
And the blackbird, "Bonnie, sweet Marjorie!"

The man came running back at last, with a blanched face and a hushed voice. "Come," he said, "and see!"

They went and saw.

At the feet of Virgil's statue Florentian lay dead. A dark pool almost hid that dark stain on the ground, the three lines on his forehead were etched in blood, and across the shattered brow lay a ponderous gilded wreath; while over the extin-

guished altar-fire the idol seemed to quiver its derisive tongue.

"He is already laurelled," said one, breaking at length the silence; "we come too late."

Too late. The crown of Virgil, magician and poet, had descended on him.

THE END

ON THE NEXT PAGE WILL BE FOUND
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